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Congregational churches in the U.S.
" Original constitution, order & fai
etc.

A

PLATFORM

OF

CHURCH DISCIPLINE:

GATHERED OUT OF THE WORD OF GOD, AND AGREED UPON BY THE

ELDERS AND MESSENGERS

OF THE

CHURCHES ASSEMBLED IN THE

SYNOD

AT CAMBRIDGE, IN NEW-ENGLAND:

TO BE PRESENTED TO THE

CHURCHES AND GENERAL COURT,

FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION AND ACCEPTANCE IN THE LORD, THE EIGHTH MONTH, ANNO 1648.

Congregational churches in the U.S.

How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts. *Psal.* lxxxiv. 1.

LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth. *Psal* xxvi. 8.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple. *Psal.* xxvii. 4.

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1808.

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At a General Court held at Boston, May 19th, 1680.

THIS Court having taken into serious consideration the request that hath been presented by several of the reverend elders, in the name of the late Synod, do approve thereof, and accordingly order, THE CONFESSION OF FAITH, agreed upon at their second session, and THE PLATFORM OF DISCIPLINE, consented unto by the Synod at CAMBRIDGE, anno 1648, to be printed for the benefit of the churches in present and after times.

EDWARD RAWSON, Sec'y.

THE PREFACE.

THE setting forth of the public confession of the faith of churches hath a double end, and both tending to public edification: First, the maintenance of the faith intire within itself: Secondly, the holding forth of unity and harmony both amongst and with other churches. Our churches here, as, by the grace of Christ, we believe and profess the same doctrine of the truth of the gospel, which generally is received in all the reformed churches of Christ in Europe, so especially we desire not to vary from the doctrine of faith and truth held forth by the churches of our native country. For though it be not one native country that can breed us all of one mind; nor ought we to have the glorious faith of our Lord Jesus with respect to persons, yet as *Paul*, who was himself a Jew, professed to hold forth the doctrine of justification by faith, and of the resurrection of the dead, according as he knew his godly countrymen did, who were Jews by nature, (*Gal.* ii. 15. *Acts* xxvi. 6. 7.) so we who are by nature Englishmen, do desire to hold forth the same doctrine of religion, especially in fundamentals, which we see and know to be held by the churches of *England*, according to the truth of the gospel.

The more we discern (that which we do, and have cause to do with incessant mourning and trembling) the unkind, and unbrotherly, and unchristian contention of our godly brethren and countrymen in matters of church government, the more earnestly do we desire to see them join together in one common faith, and ourselves with them. For this end, having perused the public

confession of the faith, agreed upon by the reverend assembly of divines at *Westminster*, and finding the sum and substance thereof, in matters of doctrine, to express not their own judgment only, but ours also; and being likewise called upon by our godly magistrates, do draw up a public confession of that faith which is constantly taught, and generally professed amongst us; we thought good to present unto them, and with them to our churches, and with them to all the churches of Christ abroad, our professed and hearty assent and attestation to the whole confession of faith (for substance of doctrine) which the reverend assembly presented to the religious and honourable parliament of *England*: excepting only some sections in the 25. 30. and 31. chapters of their confession, which concern points of controversy in church discipline; touching which we refer ourselves to the draught of the church discipline in the ensuing treatise.

The truth of what we here declare may appear by the unanimous vote of the Synod of the Elders and Messengers of our churches, assembled at *Cambridge*, the last of the sixth month, 1648, which jointly passed in these words: This synod having perused and considered, with much gladness of heart, and thankfulness to God, the confession of faith, published of late by the reverend assembly in *England*, do judge it to be very holy, orthodox, and judicious in all matters of faith; and do therefore freely and fully consent thereunto, for the substance thereof. Only in those things which have respect to church government, and discipline, we refer ourselves to the platform of church discipline, agreed upon by this present assembly; and do therefore think it meet, that this confession of faith should be commended to

the churches of Christ amongst us, and to the honoured court, as worthy of their due consideration and acceptance. Howbeit, we may not conceal, that the doctrine of *vocation*, expressed in *chap.* x. *sect.* 1. and summarily repeated in *chap.* xiii. *sect.* 1. passed not without some debate. Yet considering the term of *vocation*, and others by which it is described, are capable of a large, or more strict sense and use, and that it is not intended to bind apprehensions precisely in point of order or method, there hath been a general condescendency thereunto.

Now by this our professed consent and free concurrence with them in all the doctrinals of religion, we hope it may appear to the world, that as we are a remnant of the people of the same nation with them, so we are professors of the same common faith, and fellow-heirs of the same common salvation. Yea moreover, as this our profession of the same faith with them, will exempt us, even in their judgments, from suspicion of heresy; so, we trust, it may exempt us in the like sort from suspicion of *schism:* that though we are forced to dissent from them in matters of church-discipline, yet our dissent is not taken up out of arrogancy of spirit in ourselves, whom, they see, willingly condescend to learn of them, neither is it carried with uncharitable censoriousness towards them, (both which are the proper and essential characters of *schism*) but in meekness of wisdom, as we walk along with them, and follow them as they follow Christ; so where we conceive a different apprehension of the mind of Christ; as it falleth out in some few points touching church-order, we still reserve due reverence to them whom we judge to be, through Christ, the glorious lights of both nations, and only crave leave, as

in the spirit we are bound, to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth, and, after the apostles example, as we believe, so we speak.

And if the example of such poor outcasts as ourselves might prevail, if not with all (for that were too great a blessing to hope for) yet with some or other of our brethren in *England*, so far as they are come to mind and speak the same thing with such as dissent from them, we hope in Christ it would not only moderate the harsh judging and condemning of one another in such differences of judgment as may be found in the choicest saints; but also prevent, by the mercy of Christ, the peril of the distraction and destruction of all the churches in both kingdoms. Otherwise, if brethren shall go on to bite and devour one another, the apostle feared, as we also with sadness of heart do, it will tend to the consuming of them, and us all, which the Lord prevent.

We are not ignorant, that besides these aspersions of *heresy* and *schism*, other exceptions also are taken at our way of church government, but, as we conceive, upon as little ground. As,

1. That by admitting none into the fellowship of our church but saints by calling, we rob many parish churches of their best members, to make up one of our congregations, which is not only to gather churches out of churches, a thing unheard of in scripture, but also to weaken the hearts and hands of the best ministers in the parishes, by despoiling them of their best hearers.

2. That we provide no course for the gaining, and calling in of ignorant, and erroneous, and scandalous persons, whom we refuse to receive into our churches, and so exclude from the wholesome remedy of church discipline.

3. That in our way we sow seeds of division, and hindrance of edification in every family; whilst admitting into our churches only voluntaries, the husband will be of one church, the wife of another; the parents of one church, the children of another; the master of one church, the servants of another. And so the parents and masters being of different churches from their children and servants, they cannot take a just account of their profiting by what they hear; yea, by this means the husband, parents, and masters shall be chargeable to the maintenance of many other churches, and church officers, besides their own; which will prove a charge and burthen unsupportable.

But for answer, as to the first; for gathering churches out of churches, we cannot say that it is a thing unheard of in scripture. The first christian church was gathered out of the Jewish church, and out of many synagogues in that church, and consisted partly of the *Galileans;* who though they kept some communion in some parts of public worship with the temple, yet neither did they frequent the sacrifices, nor repair to the sanhedrim for the determining of their church causes, but kept intire and constant communion with the apostles' church in all the ordinances of the gospel. And for the first christian church of the Gentiles at *Antioch*, it appeareth to have been gathered and constituted partly of the dispersed brethren of the church at *Jerusalem* whereof some were men of *Cyprus* and *Cyrene*, and partly of the believing Gentiles. Acts xi. 10, 21.

If it be said, the first christian church at *Jerusalem*, and that at *Antioch*, were gathered not out of any christian church, but of the Jewish temple and synagogues, which were shortly after to be

abolished, and their gathering to *Antioch* was upon occasion of dispersion in time of persecution

We desire it may be considered, 1. That the members of the Jewish church were more strongly and straitly tied by express holy covenant, to keep fellowship with the Jewish church till it was abolished, than any members of christian parish churches are wont to be tied to keep fellowship with their parish churches. The episcopal canons, which bind them to attend on their parish church, it is likely they are now abolished with the episcopacy. The common law of the land is satisfied, as we conceive, if they attend upon the worship of God in any other church, though not within their own parish. But not like such covenant of God, nor any other religious tie lieth upon them to attend the worship of God in their own parish church, as did lie upon the Jews to attend upon the worship of God in their temple and synagogues.

2. Though the Jewish temple church at *Jerusalem* was to be abolished, yet that doth not make the desertion of it by the members to be lawful, till it was abolished. Future abolition is no warrant for present desertion, unless it be lawful, in some case, whilst the church is yet in present standing, to desert it; to wit, either for avoiding present polutions, or for hope of greater edification, and so for better satisfaction to conscience in either. Future events, or foresight of them do not dissolve present relations, else wives, children, servants, might desert their husbands, parents, masters, when they be mortally sick.

3. What the members of the Jewish church did, in joining to the church at *Antioch* in time of persecution, it may well be conceived the members

of any christian church may do the like for satisfaction of conscience. Peace of conscience is more desirable than the peace of the outward man; and freedom from scruples of conscience is more comfortable to a sincere heart, than freedom from persecution.

If it be said, those members of the christian church at *Jerusalem* that joined to the church at *Antioch*, removed their habitations together with their relations; which if the brethren of the congregational way would do, it would much abate the grievance of their departure from their presbyterial churches:

We verily could wish them so to do, as well approving the like removal of habitation, in case of changing church relations, provided that it may be done without too much detriment to their outward estates, and we for our parts have done the same. But to put a necessity of removal of habitation in such a case, it is to foment and cherish a corrupt principle of making civil cohabitation, if not a formal cause, yet at least a proper adjunct of church relation, which the truth of the gospel doth not acknowledge. Now to foment an error to the prejudice of the truth of the gospel, is not to walk with a right foot, according to the truth of the gospel, as *Paul* judgeth, *Gal.* ii. 1.

4. We do not think it meet or safe, for a member of a presbyterial church forthwith to desert his relation to his church, betake himself to the fellowship of a congregational church, though he may discern some defect in the estate or government of his own. For,

1. Faithfulness of brotherly love in church relation requireth that the members of the church should first convince their brethren of their sinful defects, and duly wait for their reformation, before

they depart from them. For if we must take such a course for the healing of a private brother, in a way of brotherly love, with much meekness and patience; how much more ought we so to walk with like tenderness towards a whole church.

Again, 2. By the hasty departure of sound members from a defective church, reformation is not promoted, but many times retarded, and corruption increased. Whereas on the contrary, while sincere members, breathing after purity of reformation, abide together, they may by the blessing of God upon their faithful endeavours, prevail much with their elders and neighbours towards a reformation, it may be so much as that their elders in their own church shall receive none to the seals but visible saints; and in the classis shall put forth no authoritative act, but consultative only, touching the members of other churches, not touching their own, but with the consent, silent consent at least, of their own church: Which two things, if they can obtain with any humble, meek, holy, faithful endeavours, we conceive they might, by the grace of Christ, find liberty of conscience to continue their relation with their own presbyterial church without scruple.

5. But to add a word further, touching the gathering of churches out of churches: what if there were no example of such a thing extant in the scripture? That which we are wont to answer the antipædo-baptists, may suffice here; it is enough, if any evidence thereof may be gathered from just consequence of scripture light. Dr. *Ames'* judgment concerning this case passeth, for ought we know, without exception, which he gave in his fourth book of conscience, in answer to two questions chap. xiv. num. 16. If any, said he, wronged with

unjust vexation, or providing for his own edification, or in testimony against sin, depart from a church, where some evils are tolerated, and join himself to another more pure, yet without condemning of the church he leaveth, he is not therefore to be held as a schismatic, or as guilty of any other sin.

Where the tripartite disjunction, which the judicious doctor putteth, declareth the lawfulness of the departure of a church member from his church, when either through weariness of unjust vexation, or in way of provision for his own edification, or in testimony against sin, he joineth himself to another congregation more reformed; any one of these he judgeth a lawful departure, though all of them do not concur together. Neither will such a practice despoil the best ministers of the parishes of their best hearers. For,

1. Sometimes the ministers themselves are willing to join with other better sort of hearers in this way of reformation, and then they and their hearers continue still their church relation together; yea, and confirm it more straitly and strongly, by an express renewed covenant, though the ministers may still continue their wonted preaching to the whole parish.

2. If the ministers do dislike the way of those whom they otherwise count the members, and so refuse to join with them therein; yet if those members can procure some other ministers to join with them in their own way, and still continue their dwelling together in the same town, they may easily order the times of public assembly, as to attend constantly upon the ministry of their former church; and either after or before the public assembly of the parish, take an opportunity to gather together for the administration of the sacra-

ments and censures, and to get church ordinances amongst themselves. The first apostolic church assembled to hear the word with the Jewish church in the open courts of the temple, but afterwards gathered together for breaking of bread, and other acts of church order, from house to house.

3. Suppose presbyterial churches should communicate some of their best gifted members towards the erecting of another church, it would not forthwith be their detriment, but may be their enlargement. It is the most noble and perfect work of a living creature, both in nature and grace, to propagate and multiply his kind; and it is the honour of the faithful spouse of Christ to set forward the work of Christ, as well abroad as at home. The church in *Cant.* viii. 8. to help forward her little sister church was willing to part with her choice materials, even beams of cedar, and such precious living stones as were fit to build a silver palace. In the same book the church is sometimes compared to a garden, sometimes to an orchard, *Cant.* iv. 12, 13. No man planteth a garden or orchard, but seeketh to get the choicest herbs and plants of his neighbours, and they freely impart them; nor do they count it a spoil to their garden and orchard, but rather a glory. Nevertheless, we go not so far, we neither seek nor ask the choice members of the parishes, but accept them being offered.

If it be said, they are not offered by the ministers, nor by the parish churches, who have most right in them, but only by ourselves;

It may justly be demanded, what right or what power have either the ministers or parish church over them? Not by solemn church government, for that, though it be the firmest engagement, is not

owned, but rejected. If it be their joining with the parish in calling and election of a minister to such a congregation at his first coming, there is indeed just weight in such an engagement; nor do we judge it safe for such to remove from such a minister, unless it be upon such grounds as may justly give him due satisfaction. But if the union of such members to a parish church, and to the ministry thereof, be only by co-habitation within the precincts of the parish, that union, as it was founded upon human law, so by human law it may easily be released. Or otherwise, if a man remove his habitation, he removeth also the bond of his relation and the ground of offence.

4. It need not be feared that all the best hearers of the best ministers, no, nor the most of them will depart from them upon point of church government. Those who have found the presence and power of the spirit of Christ breathing in their ministers, either to their conversion or edification, will be slow to change such a ministry of faith and holiness for the liberty of church order. Upon which ground, and sundry other such like there be, doubtless sundry godly and judicious hearers in many parishes in England, that do and will refer their relation to their ministers, though in a presbyterial way above the congregational confederation.

5. But if all or the most part of the best hearers of the best ministers of the parishes should depart from them, as preferring in their judgments the congregational way, yet in case the congregational way should prove to be of Christ it will never grieve the holy hearts of godly ministers, that their hearers should follow Christ; yea many of themselves, upon due deliberation, will be ready to go along with

them. It never grieved nor troubled *John Baptist* that his disciples departed from him to follow after Christ, *John* iii. But if the congregational way should prove to be, not the institution of Christ, as we take it, but the invention of men, then doubtless the presbyterian form, if it be of God, will swallow up the other, as *Moses's* rod devoured the rods of the *Egyptians*. Nor will this put a necessity upon both the opposite parties to shift for themselves, and seek to supplant one another, but only it will call upon them *(Aletheuein En Agape)* to seek and follow the truth in love, to attend in faithfulness each unto his own flock, and to administer to them all the holy things of God, and their portion of food in due season; and as for others, quietly to forbear them, and yet to instruct them with meekness, that are contrary minded, leaving it to Christ, in the use of all good means, to reveal his own truth in his own time, and meanwhile endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, *Phil.* iii. 15. 16. *Eph.* iv. 3.

To the second exception, that we take no course for the gaining and healing, and calling in of ignorant and erroneous persons, whom we refuse to receive into our churches, and so exclude them from the remedy of church discipline.

We conceive the receiving of them into our churches, would rather loose and corrupt our churches, than gain and heal them. A little leaven laid in a lump of dough, will sooner leaven the whole lump, than the whole lump will sweeten it. We find it therefore safer to square rough and unhewn stones before they be laid into the building, rather than to hammer and hew them when they lie unevenly in the building. And accordingly two

means we use to gain and call in such as are ignorant and scandalous.

1. *The public ministry of the word*, upon which they are invited by counsel, and required by wholesome laws. And the word it is, which is the power of God to salvation, to the calling and winning of souls.

2. *Private conference*, and conviction by the elders, and other able brethren of the church, whom they do the more respectfully hearken unto, when they see no hope of enjoying church fellowship, or participation in the sacraments for themselves or their children, till they approve their judgments to be sound and orthodox, and their lives subdued to some hope of a godly conversation. What can classical discipline, or excommunication itself do more in this case.

The third exception wraps up in it a threefold domestic inconvenience, and each of them meet to be eschewed. 1. Dis-union in families between each relation. 2. Disappointment of edification, for want of opportunity in the governors of families to take account of things heard by their children and servants. 3. Disbursements of chargeable maintenance to the several churches, whereunto the several persons of their families are joined.

All which inconveniences either do not fall out in congregational churches, or are easily redressed; for none are orderly admitted into congregational churches, but such as are well approved by good testimony to be duly observant of family relation: or if any otherwise disposed should creep in, they are either orderly healed, or duly removed in a way of Christ. Nor are they admitted, unless they can give some good account of their profiting by ordinances, before the elders and brethren of the

church, and much more to their parents and masters. Godly tutors in the university can take an account of their pupils; and godly householders in the city take an account of their children and servants, how they profit by the word they have heard in several churches, and that to the greater edification of the whole family, by the variety of such administrations. Bees may bring more honey and wax into the hive, when they are not limited to one garden of flowers, but may fly abroad to many.

Nor is any charge expected from wife, children or servants to the maintenance of congregational churches, further than they may be furnished with personal estates or livings, which may enable them to contribute of such things as they have, and not of such things as they have not. God accepteth not robbery for a sacrifice. And though a godly householder may justly take himself bound in conscience to contribute to any such church, whereto his wife, or children, or servants do stand in relation, yet that will not aggravate the burthen of his charge no more than if they were received members of the same church whereto himself is related.

But why do we stand thus long to plead exemptions from exception? The Lord help all his faithful servants, whether presbyterial or congregational, to judge and shame ourselves before the Lord, for all our former compliances to greater enormities in church government than are to be found either in the congregational or presbyterial way; and then surely either the Lord will clear up his own will to us, and so frame and subdue us all to one mind and one way, (*Ezek.* xliii. 10, 11.) or else we shall learn to bear one another's burthens in a spirit of meekness. It will then doubtless be far from us, so to attest the discipline of Christ, as to de-

test the disciples of Christ: so to contend for the seamless coat of Christ, as to crucify the living members of Christ; so to divide ourselves about church communion, as through breaches to open a wide gap for a deluge of anti-christian and profane malignity to swallow up both church and civil state.

What shall we say more? Is difference of church order become the inlet of all the disorders in the kingdom? Hath the Lord indeed left us to such hardness of heart, that the church government shall become a snare to *Zion*, as sometimes *Moses* was to *Egypt*, Exod. xx. 7, that we cannot leave contesting and contending about it, till the kingdom be destroyed? Did not the Lord Jesus, when he dedicated his sufferings for his church, and his also unto his Father, make it his earnest and only prayer for us in this world, that we all might be one in him, *John* xvii. 20, 21, 22, 23. And is it possible that he, whom the Father heard always, *John* xi. 42, should not have this last most solemn prayer heard and granted? Or shall it be granted for all the saints elsewhere and not for the saints in *England*, so that amongst them dis-union shall grow even about church union and communion? If it be possible for a little faith, so much as a grain of mustard seed, to remove a mountain, is it not possible for so much strength of faith as it is, to be found in all the godly kingdoms, to remove those images of jealousy, and to cast those stumbling-blocks out of the way, which may hinder the free passage of brotherly love amongst brethren? It is true indeed, the national covenant doth justly engage both parties faithfully to endeavour the utter extirpation of the antichristian hierarchy; and much more of all blasphemies, heresies, and errors.

Certainly, if congregational discipline be independent, from the inventions of men, is it not much more independent from the delusions of Satan? What fellowship hath Christ with Belial? light with darkness? truth with error? The faithful Jews needed not the help of the Samaritans to re-edify the temple of God; yea, they rejected their help when it was offered, *Ezra* iv, 1, 2, 3. And if the congregational way be a way of truth, as we believe, and if the brethren that walk in it be zealous of the truth and hate every false way, as by the rule of their holy discipline they are instructed, then verily there is no branch in the na-national covenant, that engageth the covenanters to abhor either the congregational churches, or their way: which being duly administered, do no less effectually extirpate the antichristian hierarchy, and all blasphemies, heresies, and pernicious errors, than the other way of discipline doth, which is more generally and publickly received and ratified.

But the Lord Jesus commune with all our hearts in secret, and he who is the king of his church, let him be pleased to exercise his kingly power in our spirits, that so his kingdom may come into our churches in purity and peace. Amen.

END OF THE PREFACE.

PLATFORM.

CHAP. I.

Of the form of church government; and that it is one, immutable, and prescribed in the world.

ECCLESIASTICAL polity, or church government or discipline, is nothing else but that form and order that is to be observed in the church of Christ upon earth, both for the constitution of it, and all the administrations that therein are to be performed. *Ezek.* xliii. 11. *Col.* ii. 5. 1 *Tim.* iii. 15.

2. Church government is considered in a double respect, either in regard of the parts of government themselves, or necessary circumstances thereof. The parts of government are prescribed in the word, because the Lord Jesus Christ, the king and lawgiver of his church, is no less faithful in the house of God than was Moses, who from the Lord delivered a form and pattern of government to the children of Israel in the Old Testament; and the holy scriptures are now also so perfect, as they are able to make the man of God perfect and thoroughly furnished unto every good work; and therefore doubtless to the well ordering of the house of God. *Heb.* iii. 5, 6. *Exod.* xxv. 40. 2 *Tim.* iii. 16.

3. The parts of church government are all of them exactly described in the word of God, being parts or means of instituted worship, according

to the second commandment, and therefore to continue one and the same unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, as a kingdom that cannot be shaken, until he shall deliver it up unto God, even to the Father. So that it is not left in the power of men, officers, churches, or any state in the world to add or diminish, or alter any thing in the least measure therein. 1 *Tim.* iii. 15. 1 *Chron.* xv. 13. *Exod.* xx. 4. 1 *Tim.* vi. 13, 16. *Heb.* xii. 27, 28. 1 *Cor.* xv. 24. *Deut.* xii. 32.

4. The necessary circumstances, as time and place, &c. belonging unto order and decency, are not so left unto men, as that under pretence of them they may thrust their own inventions upon the churches, being circumscribed in the word with many general limitations, where they are determined in respect of the matter, to be neither worship itself, nor circumstances separable from worship. In respect of their end, they must be done unto edification. In respect of the manner, decently and in order, according to the nature of the things themselves, and civil and church custom. Doth not even nature itself teach you? Yea, they are in some sort determined particularly, namely, that they be done in such a manner, as, all circumstances considered, is most expedient for edification: so as if there be no error of man concerning their determination, the determining of them is to be accounted as if it were divine. *Ezek.* xliii. 8. 1 *Kings* xii. 31, 32, 33. 2 *Kings* xii. *Exod.* xx. 19. *Isa.* xxviii. 13. *Col.* i. 22, 23. *Acts* xv. 28. *Mat.* xv. 9. 1 *Cor.* xi. 28. and viii. 34. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 26 and xiv. 40. and xi. 14, 16. and xiv. 12, 19. *Acts* xv. 28.

CHAP. II.

Of the nature of the catholic church in general, and in spenial of a particular visible churc.

THE catholic church is the whole company of those that are elected, redeemed, and in time effectually called from the state of sin and death, unto a state of grace and salvation in Jesus Christ, *Eph.* i. 22, 23, and v. 25, 26, 30.

2. This church is either triumphant or militant; triumphant, the number of them who are glorified in heaven; militant, the number of them who are conflicting with their enemies upon earth. *Heb.* xii. 23. *Rom.* viii. 17. 2 *Tim.* ii. 12. and 4. 8. *Eph.* vi. 12, 13.

3. This militant church is to be considered as invisible and visible. Invisible, in respect of their relation wherein they stand to Christ, as a body unto the head, being united unto him by the spirit of God, and faith in their hearts. Visible, in respect of the profession of their faith, in their persons and in particular churches. And so there may be acknowledged an universal visible church. 2 *Tim.* ii. 19. *Rev.* ii. 17. 1 *Cor.* vi. 17. *Eph.* iii. 17. *Rom.* i. 8. 1 *Thess.* i. 8. *Isa.* ii. 2. 1 *Tim.* vi. 12.

4. The members of the visible militant church considered either as not yet in church order, or walking according to the church order of the gospel. In order, and so besides the spiritual union and communion common to believers, they enjoy moreover an union and communion ecclesiastical-political. So we deny an universal visible church. *Acts* xix. 1. *Col.* ii. 5. *Mat.* xviii. 17. 1 *Cor.* 12.

5. The state of the members of the militant visible church walking in order, was either before the law, economical, that is in families; or under the, law national; or since the coming of Christ, only congregational. The term independent we approve not. Therefore neither national, provincial nor classical. *Gen.* xviii. 19. *Exod.* xix. 6.

6. A congregational church is by the institution of Christ a part of the militant visible church, consisting of a company of saints by calling, united into one body by an holy covenant, for the public worship of God, and the mutual edification one of another, in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 23, 36. and i. 2. and xii. 27. *Exod.* xix. 5. 6. *Deut.* xxix. 1. and 9 to 15. *Acts.* ii. 42. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 26.

CHAP. III.

Of the matter of the visible church, both in respect of quality and quantity.

THE matter of a visible church are saints by calling. 1. *Cor.* i. 2. *Eph.* i. 1.

2. By saints we understand, 1. such as have not only attained the knowledge of the principles of religion, and are free from gross and open scandals, but also do together with the profession of their faith and repentance, walk in blameless obedience to the word, so that in charitable discretion they may be accounted saints by calling, though perhaps some or more of them be unsound and hypocrites inwardly, because the members of such particular churches are commonly by the Holy Ghost called saints and faithful brethren

in Christ; and sundry churches have been reproved for receiving and suffering such persons to continue in fellowship amongst them, as have been offensive and scandalous; the name of God also by this means is blasphemed, and the holy things of God defiled and profaned, the hearts of the godly grieved, and the wicked themselves hardened and helped forward to damnation. The example of such doth endanger the sanctity of others: a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

2. The children of such, who are also holy. *Heb.* vi. 1. 1 *Cor.* i. 5. *Rom.* vi. 17. 1 *Cor.* i. 2. *Phil.* i. 2. *Col.* i. 2. *Eph.* i. 1. 1 *Cor.* v. 12, 13. *Rev.* ii. 14, 15, 20. *Ezek.* xliv. 7, 9. and xxiii. 38, 39. *Num.* xvi. 20. *Hag.* ii. 13. 14. 1 *Cor.* xi. 27. 29. *Psal.* xxxvii. 21. 1 *Cor.* v. 6. 2 *Cor.* vii. 14.

3. The members of churches, though orderly constituted, may in time degenerate and grow corrupt and scandalous, which though they ought not to be tolerated in the church, yet their continuance therein, through the defect of the execution of discipline and just censures, doth not immediately dissolve the being of a church, as appears in the church of Israel, and the churches of Galatia and Corinth, Pergamus and Thyatyra. *Jer.* ii. 21. 1 *Cor.* v. 12. *Jer.* ii. 4. *Gal.* v. 4. 2 *Cor.* xii. 21. *Rev.* ii. 14, 15. and xx. 21.

4. The matter of the church in respect of its quantity, ought not to be of greater number than may ordinarily meet together conveniently in one place; nor ordinarily fewer, than may conveniently carry on church work. Hence when the holy scripture makes mention of the saints combined into a church estate, in a town or city where was but one congregation, it usually calleth those saints (the church) in the singular num-

ber; as, the church of the Thessalonians, the church of Smyrna, Philadelphia, and the like; but when it speaketh of the saints in a nation or province, wherein there were sundry congregations, it frequently and usually calleth them by the name of churches, in the plural number, as the churches of *Asia*, *Galatia*, *Macedonia*, and the like; which is further confirmed by what is written of sundry of those churches in particular, how they were assembled and met together, the whole church in one place, as the church at *Jerusalem*, the church at *Antioch*, the church at *Corinth*, and *Cenchrea*, though it were more near to *Corinth*, it being the port thereof, and answerable to a village, yet being a distinct congregation from *Corinth*, it had a church of its own, as well as *Corinth* had. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 21. *Mat.* xviii. 17. *Rom.* xvi. 1. 1 *Thess.* i. 1. *Rev.* ii. 8. and iii. 7. 1 *Cor.* xvi. 1, 19. *Gal* i. 2. 2 *Cor.* viii. 1. 1 *Thess.* ii. 14. *Acts* ii. 46. and v. 12, and vi. 2. and xiv. 27. and xv. 38. 1. 5. 4 and xiv. 23. *Rom.* xvi. 1.

5. Nor can it with reason be thought but that every church appointed and ordained by Christ, had a ministry ordained and appointed for the same; and yet plain it is, that there were no ordinary officers appointed by Christ for any other than congregational churches; elders being appointed to feed, not all flocks, but the particular flock of God over which the Holy Ghost had made them overseers, and that flock they must attend, even the whole flock; and one congregation being as much as any ordinary elder can attend, therefore there is no greater church than a congregation, which may ordinarily meet in one place, *Acts* xx. 28.

CHAP. IV.

Of the form of a visible church, and of church covenant.

SAINTS by calling must have a visible political union among themselves, or else they are not yet a particular church, as those similitudes hold forth, which the scripture makes use of to shew the nature of particular churches, as a body, a building, house, hands, eyes, feet, and other members must be united, or else (remaining separate) are not a body. Stone, timber, though squared, hewn and polished, are not a house, until they are compacted and united; so saints or believers in judgment of charity are not a church, unless orderly knit together. 1 *Cor.* xii. 27. 1 *Tim.* iii. 15. *Eph.* ii. 22. 1 *Cor.* xii. 15, 16, 17. *Rev.* i.

2. Particular churches cannot be distinguished one from another, but by their forms: *Ephesus* is not *Smyrna,* nor *Pergamus*, *Thyatira*, but each one a distinct society of itself, having officers of their own, which had not the charge of others; virtues of their own, for which others are not praised; corruptions of their own, for which others are not blamed.

3. This form is a visible covenant, agreement, or consent, whereby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the ordinances of Christ together in the same society, which is usually called the church covenant; For we see not otherwise how members can have church power one over another mutually. The comparing of each particular church to a city, and unto a spouse, seemeth to conclude not only a form, but that form is by way of covenant. The covenant, as it was

that which made the family of *Abraham*, and children of *Israel* to be a church and people unto God, so it is that which now makes the several societies of *Gentile* believers to be churches in these days. *Exod.* xix. 5, 8. *Deut.* xxix. 12, 13. *Zech.* xi. 14. and ix, 11. *Eph.* ii. 19. 2*Cor.* xii. 2. *Gen.* xvii. 7. *Deut.* xxix. 12, 13. *Eph.* ii. 12, 18.

4. This voluntary agreement, consent or covenant, (for all these are taken here for the same) although the more express and plain it is, the more fully it puts us in mind of our mutual duty, and stirreth us up to it, and leaveth less room for the questioning the truth of the church estate of a company of professors, and the truth of membership of particular persons; yet we conceive the substance of it is kept, where there is a real agreement and consent of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one congregation, for the public worship of God, and their mutual edification; which real agreement and consent they do express by their constant practice in coming together for the public worship of God, and by their religious subjection to the ordinances of God there; the rather if we consider how scripture covenants have been entered into not only expressly by word of mouth, but by sacrifice, by hand writing and seal, and also sometimes by silent consent, without any writing or expression of words at all. *Exod.* xix. 5. and xx. 8. and 24. 3, 17. *Josh.* xxiv. 18, 24. *Psal.* l. 5. *Neh.* ix. 3, 8, and 10. *Gen.* i. 17. *Deut.* xxix.

5. This form being by mutual covenant, it followeth, it is not faith in the heart, nor the profession of that faith, nor cohabitation, nor baptism. 1. Not faith in the heart, because that is invisible. 2. Not a bare profession, because

that declareth them no more to be the members of one church than another. 3. Not cohabitation; atheists or infidels may dwell together with believers. 4. Not baptism, because it pre-supposeth a church estate, as circumcision in the old testament, which gave no being to the church, the church being before it, and in the wilderness without it. Seals pre-suppose a covenant already in being. One person is a complete subject of baptism, but one person is uncapable of being a church.

6. All believers ought, as God giveth them opportunity thereunto, to endeavour to join themselves unto a particular church, and that in respect of the honour of Jesus Christ, in his example and institution, by the professed acknowledgment of, and subjection unto the order and ordinances of the gospel; as also in respect of their good of communion, founded upon their visible union, and contained in the promises of Christ's special presence in the church; whence they have fellowship with him, and in him one with another; also, for the keeping of them in the way of God's commandments, and recovering of them in case of wandering, which all Christ's sheep are subject to in this life, being unable to return themselves; together with the benefit of their mutual edification, and of their posterity, that they may not be cut off from the privileges of the covenant. Otherwise, if a believer offends, he remains destitute of the remedy provided in that behalf. And should all believers neglect this duty of joining to all particular congregations, it might follow thereupon, that Christ should have no visible political churches upon earth. *Acts* ii. 24, and ix. 26. *Mat.* iii.

13, 14, 15, and 28, 29, 30. *Psal.* cxxiii. 2, 3. and lxxxvii. 7. *Mat.* xviii. 20. 1 *John* i. 3. *Psal.* cxix. 176. 1 *Pet.* ii. 25. *Eph.* iv, 16. *Joh.* xxii. 24, 25. *Mat.* xviii. 15, 16, 17.

CHAP. V.

Of the first subject of church power; or, to whom church power doth first belong.

THE first subject of church power is either supreme or subordinate and ministerial; the supreme, by way of gift from the Father, is the Lord Jesus Christ: The ministerial is either extraordinary as the apostles, prophets and evangelists; or ordinary, as every particular congregational church. *Mat.* xviii. 18. *Rev.* iii. 7. *Isa.* ix. 6. *John* xx. 21, 23. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 32. *Tit.* i. 5. 1 *Cor.* v. 12.

2. Ordinary church power, is either the power of office, that is, such as is proper to the eldership, or power of privilege, such as belongs to the brotherhood. The latter is in the brethren formally, and immediately from Christ, that is, so as it may be acted or exercised immediately by themselves; the former is not in them formally or immediately, and therefore cannot be acted or exercised immediately by them, but is said to be in them, in that they design the persons unto office, who only are to act, or to exercise this power. *Rom.* xii. 4, 8. *Acts* i. 2, 3. and vi. 3, 4. and xiv. 23. 1 *Cor.* x. 29, 30.

CHAP. VI.

Of the officers of the church, and especially of pastors and teachers.

A CHURCH being a company of people combined together by covenant for the worship of God, it appeareth thereby, there may be the essence and being of a church without any officers, seeing there is both the form and matter of a church; which is implied when it is said, the apostles ordained elders in every church, *Acts* xiv. 23.

2. Nevertheless, though officers be not absolutely necessary to the simple being of churches, when they be called, yet ordinarily to their calling they are, and to their well being, and therefore the Lord Jesus, out of his tender compassion, hath appointed and ordained officers, which he would not have done, if they had not been useful and needful for the church; yea, being ascended into heaven, he received gifts for men, and gave gifts to men, whereof officers for the church are justly accounted no small parts, they being to continue to the end of the world, and for the perfecting of all the saints. *Rom.* x. 17. *Jer.* iii. 15. 1 *Cor.* xii. 28. *Eph.* iv. 11. *Psal.* lxviii. 18. *Eph.* iv. 8, 11. and iv. 12, 13.

3. These officers were either extraordinary or ordinary: extraordinary, as apostles, prophets, evangelists; ordinary, as elders and deacons. The apostles, prophets, and evangelists as they were called extraordinarily by Christ, so their office ended with themselves; whence it is that *Paul* directing *Timothy* how to carry along church administrations, giveth no direction about the choice

or course of apostles, prophets, or evangelists, but only of elders and deacons; and when Paul was to take his last leave of the church of *Ephesus*, he committed the care of feeding the church to no other but unto the elders of that church. The like charge doth Peter commit to the elders. 1 *Cor.* xii. 18. *Eph.* iv. 11. *Acts.* viii. 6, 16, 19. and xi. 28. *Rom.* xi. 13. 1 *Cor.* iv. 9. 1 *Tim.* iii. 1, 2, 8 to 13. *Tit.* i. 8. *Acts* xx. 17, 28. 1 Pet. v. 1, 2, 3.

4. Of elders, who are also in scripture called bishops, some attend chiefly to the ministry of the word, as the pastors and teachers; others attend especially unto rule, who are therefore called ruling elders. 1 *Tim.* ii. 3. Phil. i. 1. *Acts* xx. 17. 28. 1 *Tim.* v. 7.

5. The office of pastor and teacher, appears to be distinct. The pastor's special work is to attend to exhortation, and therein to administer a word of wisdom; the teacher is to attend to doctrine, and therein to administer a word of knowledge; and either of them to administer the seals of that covenant, unto the dispensation whereof they are alike called; as also to execute the censures, being but a kind of application of the word: The preaching of which, together with the application thereof, they are alike charged withal. *Eph.* iv. 11. *Rom.* xii. 7, 8. 1 *Cor.* xii. 8. 2 *Tim.* iv. 1, 2. *Titus* i. 9.

6. And forasmuch as both pastors and teachers are given by Christ for the perfecting of the saints, and edifying of his body; which saints and body of Christ is his church: And therefore we account pastors and teachers to be both of them church officers, and not the pastor for the church, and the teacher only for the schools: Though this we gladly acknowledge, that schools are both lawful, pro-

fitable, and necessary for the training up of such in good literature or learning, as may afterwards be called forth unto office of pastor or teacher in the church. *Eph.* iv. 11, 12. and i. 22, 23. 1 *Sam.* x. 12, 19, 20. 2 *Kings* ii. 3, 15.

CHAP. VII.

Of ruling elders and deacons.

THE ruling elder's office is distinct from the office of pastor and teacher. The ruling elders are not so called, to exclude the pastors and teachers from ruling, because ruling and governing is common to these with the other, whereas attending to teach and preach the word is peculiar unto the former. *Rom.* xii. 7, 8, 9. 1 *Tim.* v. 17. 1 *Cor.* xii. 28. *Heb.* iii. 17. 1 *Tim.* v. 17.

2. The ruling elder's work is to join with the pastor and teacher in those acts of spiritual rule, which are distinct from the ministry of the word and sacraments committed to them. Of which sort these be as followeth: 1. To open and shut the doors of God's house, by the admission of members approved by the church; by ordination of officers chosen by the church, and by excommunication of notorious and obstinate offenders renounced by the church, and by restoring of penitents forgiven by the church. 2. To call the church together when there is occasion, and seasonably to dismiss them again. 3. To prepare matters in private, that in public they may be carried to an end with less trouble, and more speedy dispatch. 4. To moderate the carriage of all matters in the church assembled; as, to pro-

pound matters to the church, to order the season of speech and silence, and to pronounce sentence according to the mind of Christ, with the consent of the church. 5. To be guides and leaders to the church, in all matters whatsoever pertaining to church administrations and actions. 6. To see that none in the church live inordinately, out of rank and place, without a calling, or idly in their calling. 7. To prevent and heal such offences in life or in doctrine, as might corrupt the church. 8. To feed the flock of God with a word of admonition. 9. And as they shall be sent for, to visit and pray over the sick brethren. 10. And at other times as opportunity shall serve thereunto. 1 *Tim.* v. 17. 2 *Chron.* xxiii. 19. *Rev.* xxi. 21. 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. *Mat.* xxviii. 17. 2 *Cor.* ii. 7, 8. *Acts* xxi. 18, 22, 23. and vi. 2, 3. and xiii. 15. 2 *Cor.* viii. 19. *Heb.* xiii. 7, 17. 2 *Thess.* ii. 10, 11, 12. *Acts* xx. 28, 32. 1 *Thess.* v. 12. *James* v. 14. *Acts* xx. 20.

3. The office of a deacon is instituted in the church by the Lord Jesus; sometimes they are called helps. The scripture telleth us how they should be qualified, "Grace, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not given to filthy lucre." They must first be proved, and then use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. The office and work of a deacon, is to receive the offerings of the church, gifts given to the church, and to keep the treasury of the church, and therewith to serve the tables which the church is to provide for; as the Lord's table, the table of the ministers, and of such as are in necessity, to whom they are to distribute in simplicity. *Acts* vi. 3. *Phil.* i. 1. 1 *Tim.* iii. 8. 1 *Cor.* xii. 28. 1 *Tim.* iii. 8, 9. *Acts* iv. 35, and vi. 2, 3. *Rom.* 12. 8.

4. The office therefore being limited unto the care of the temporal good things of the church, it extends not to the attendance upon, and administration of the spiritual things thereof, as the word and sacraments, or the like. 1 *Cor.* vii. 17.

5. The ordinance of the apostle, and practice of the church, commends the Lord's day as a fit time for the contribution of the saints. 1. *Cor.* xvi. 1, 2, 3.

6. The instituting of all these officers in the church, is the work of God himself, of the Lord Jesus Christ, of the Holy Ghost; and therefore such officers as he hath not appointed are altogether unlawful either to be placed in the church, or to be retained therein, and are to be looked at as human creatures, mere inventions, and appointments of man, to the great dishonour of Christ Jesus the Lord of his house, the king of his church, whether popes, patriarchs, cardinals, arch-bishops, lord-bishops, arch-deacons, officials, commissaries, and the like. These and the rest of that hierarchy and retinue, not being plants of the Lord's planting, shall all be certainly rooted out and cast forth. 1 *Cor.* xii. 28. *Eph.* iv. 8, 11. *Acts* xx. 28. *Mat.* xv. 13.

7. The Lord hath appointed ancient widows, where they may be had, to minister in the church, in giving attendance to the sick, and to give succour unto them, and others in the like necessities. 1 *Tim.* v. 9, 10.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the election of church officers.

NO man may take the honour of a church officer unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was *Aaron*. *Heb.* v. 4.

2. Calling unto office is either immediate, by Christ himself, such was the call of the apostles and prophets, this manner of calling ended with them as hath been said: or mediate, by the church. *Gal.* i. 1. *Acts* xiv. 23. and vi. 3.

3. It is meet that before any be ordained, or chosen officers, they should be first tried and proved, because hands are not suddenly to be laid upon any, and both elders and deacons must be of honest and good report. 1 *Tim.* v. 22. and vii. 10. *Acts* xvi. 2. and vi. 3.

4. The things in respect of which they are to be tried, are those gifts and virtues which the scripture requireth in men that are to be elected into such places, viz. that elders must be blameless, sober, apt to teach, and endued with such other qualifications as are laid down. 1 *Tim.* iii. 2. *Tit.* i. 6 to 9. Deacons to be fitted as is directed, *Acts* vi. 3. 1. *Tim.* iii. 8 to 11.

5. Officers are to be called by such churches whereunto they are to minister. Of such moment is the preservation of this power, that the churches exercised it in the presence of the apostles. *Acts* xiv. 23. and i. 23, and vi. 3, 4, 5.

6. A church being free, cannot become subject to any, but by a free election; yet when such a people do choose any to be over them in the Lord, then do they become subject, and most willingly

submit to their ministry in the Lord, whom they have so chosen, *Gal.* v. 3. *Heb.* xiii. 17.

7. And if the church have power to choose their officers and ministers, then in case of manifest unworthiness and delinquency, they have power also to depose them: for to open and shut, to choose and refuse, to constitute in office and remove from office, are acts belonging to the same power. *Rom.* xvi. 17.

8. We judge it much conducing to the well being and communion of churches, that where it may conveniently be done, neighbour churches be advised withal, and their help be made use of in the trial of church officers, in order to their choice, *Cant.* viii. 8, 9.

9. The choice of such church officers belongeth not to the civil magistrates, as such, or diocesan bishops, or patrons; for of these, or any such like, the scripture is wholly silent, as having any power therein.

CHAP. IX.

Of ordination and imposition of hands.

CHURCH officers are not only to be chosen by the church, but also to be ordained by imposition of hands and prayer, with which at the ordination of elders, fasting also is to be joined, *Acts* xiii. 3. and xiv. 23. 1 *Tim.* v. 22.

2. This ordination we account nothing else but the solemn putting a man into his place and office in the church, whereunto he had right before by election; being like the installing of a magistrate in the commonwealth. Ordination therefore is

not to go before but to follow election. The essence and substance of the outward calling of an ordinary officer in the church, doth not consist in his ordination, but in his voluntary and free election by the church, and his accepting of that election; whereupon is founded that relation between pastor and flock, between such a minister and such a people. Ordination doth not constitute an officer, nor give him the essentials of his office. The apostles were elders without imposition of hands by men; *Paul* and *Barnabas* were officers before that imposition of hands, *Acts* xiii. 3. The posterity of *Levi* were priests and levites, before hands were laid on them by the children of Israel, *Numb.* viii. 10. *Acts* vi. 5, 6. and xiii. 2, 3. and xiv. 23. 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. 1 *Tim.* v. 22.

3. In such churches where there are elders, imposition of hands in ordination, is to be performed by those elders.

4. In such churches where there are no elders, imposition of hands may be performed by some of the brethren orderly chosen by the church thereunto. For if the people may elect officers, which is the greater, and wherein the substance of the office doth consist, they may much more, occasion and need so requiring, impose hands in ordination, which is less, and but the accomplishment of the other. *Numb.* viii. 10.

5. Nevertheless, in such churches where there are no elders, and the church so desire, we see not why imposition of hands may not be performed by the elders of other churches. Ordinary officers laid hands upon the officers of many churches: The presbytery at *Ephesus* laid hands upon *Timothy*, an evangelist; the presbytery at *Antioch* laid

hands upon *Paul* and *Barnabus*, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. *Acts* xiii. 3.

6. Church officers are officers to one church, even that particular church over which the Holy Ghost hath made them overseers. Insomuch as elders are commanded to feed, not all flocks, but that flock which is committed to their faith and trust, and dependeth upon them. Nor can constant residence at one congregation be necessary for a minister, no, nor yet lawful, if he be not a minister to one congregation only, but to the church universal; because he may not attend one part only of the church to which he is a minister, but he is called to attend unto all the flock. 1 *Pet.* v. 2. *Acts* xx. 28.

7. He that is clearly loosed from his office relation unto that church whereof he was a minister, cannot be looked at as an officer, nor perform any act of office in any other church, unless he be again orderly called unto office; which when it shall be, we know nothing to hinder, but imposition of hands also in his ordination ought to be used towards him again. For so *Paul* the apostle received imposition of hands twice at least from *Annanias*, *Acts* ix. 17. and xiii. 3.

CHAP. X.

Of the power of the church and its presbytery.

SUPREME and lordly power over all the churches upon the earth doth only belong unto Jesus Christ, who is king of the church, and the head thereof. He hath the government upon his shoulders, and hath all power given to him both in

heaven and earth, Psal. ii. 6. Eph. i. 21,22. Isa. ix. 6. Mat. xxviii. 18.

2. A company of professed believers ecclesiastically confederate, as they are a church, before they have officers, and without them ; so even in that estate, subordinate church power, under Christ, delegated to them by him, doth belong to them in such a manner as is before expressed, Chap. 5. sect. 2. and as flowing from the very nature and essence of a church : It being natural to all bodies, and so unto a church body, to be furnished with sufficient power for its own preservation and subsistence. *Acts* i. 23. and xiv. 23 and vi. 3, 4. *Mat.* xviii. 17. 1 *Cor.* v. 4, 5.

3. This government of the church is a mixt government, and so hath been acknowledged long before the term of independency was heard of, in respect of Christ, the head and King of the church, and the sovereign power residing in him, and exercised by him, it is a monarchy ; in respect of the body or brotherhood of the church, and power from Christ granted unto them, it resembles a democracy ; in respect of the presbytery, and power committed unto them, it is an aristocracy. *Rev.* iii. 7. 1 *Cor.* v. 12. 1 *Tim.* v. 27.

4. The sovereign power which is peculiar unto Christ is exercised. 1. In calling the church out of the world unto holy fellowship with himself. 2. In instituting the ordinances of his worship, and appointing his ministers and officers for the dispensing of them. 3. In giving laws for the ordering of all our ways, and the ways of his house. 4. In giving power and life to all his institutions, and to his people by them. 5. In protecting and delivering his church against and from all the enemies of their peace. *Gal.* i. 4. *Rev.* v. 8, 9. *Mat.*

xxviii. 20. *Eph.* iv. 8, 11. *Jam.* iv. 12. *Isa.* xxxiii. 22. 1 *Tim.* iii. 15. 2 *Cor.* x. 4, 5. *Isa.* xxxii. 2. *Luke* xvii. 1.

5. The power granted by Christ unto the holy body of the church and brotherhood, is a prerogative or privilege which the church doth exercise. 1. In choosing their own officers, whether elders or deacons. 2. In admission of their own members, and therefore there is great reason they should have power to remove any from their fellowship, again. Hence in case of offence, any brother hath power to convince and admonish an offending brother; and in case of not hearing him, to take one or two more to set on the admonition; and in case of not hearing them, to proceed to tell the church; and as his offence may require, the whole church hath power to proceed to the censure of him, whether by admonition or excommunication; and upon his repentance, to restore him again unto his former communion. *Acts* iii. 5. and xiv. 23. and ix. 26. *Mat.* xviii. 15, 16, 17. *Tit.* iii. 10. *Col.* iv. 17. 2 *Cor.* ii. 7, 8.

6. In case an elder offend incorrigibly, the matter so requiring, as the church had power to call him to office, so they have power according to order (the council of other churches, where it may be had, directing thereto) to remove him from his office; and being now but a member, in case he add contumacy to his sin, the church that had power to receive him into their fellowship, hath also the same power to cast him out, that they have concerning any other member. *Col.* iv. 17. *Rom.* xvi. 17. *Mat.* xviii. 17.

7. Church government or rule, is placed by Christ in the officers of the church, who are therefore called rulers, while they rule with God; yet

in case of mal-administration, they are subject to the power of the church, as hath been said before. The Holy Ghost frequently, yea always, where it mentioned church rule, and church government, ascribeth it to elders; whereas the work and duty of the people is expressed in the phrase of obeying their elders, and submitting themselves unto them in the Lord. So as it is manifest, that an organic or complete church is a body politic consisting of some that are governors, and some that are governed in the Lord. 1 *Tim.* v. 17. *Heb.* xiii. 17. 1 *Thess.* v. 12. *Rom.* xii. 8. 1 *Cor.* xii. 28, 29. *Heb.* xiii. 7, 17.

8. The power which Christ has committed to the elders, is to feed and rule the church of God, and accordingly to call the church together upon any weighty occasion; when the members so called, without a just cause, may not refuse to come, nor when they are come, depart before they are dismissed, nor speak in the church before they have leave from the elders; nor continue so doing when they require silence; nor may they oppose nor contradict the judgment or sentence of the elders, without sufficient and weighty cause, because such practices are manifestly contrary unto order and government, and inlets of disturbances, and tend to confusion. *Acts* xx. 28. and vi. 2. *Numb.* xvi. 12. *Ezek.* xlvi. 10. *Acts* xiii. 15. *Hos.* iv. 4.

9. It belongs also unto the elders to examine any officers or members before they be received of the church; to receive the accusations brought to the church, and to prepare them for the church's hearing. In handling of offences, and other matters before the church, they have power to declare and publish the counsel and will of God, touching the same, and to pronounce sentence with consent of

the church. Lastly, They have power, when they dismiss the people, to bless them in the name of the Lord. *Rev.* ii. 2. 1 *Tim.* v. 19. *Acts* xxi. 18. 22, 23. 1 *Cor.* v. 4, 5. *Num.* vi. 23 to 26.

10. This power of government in the elders doth not any wise prejudice the power of privilege in the brotherhood; as neither the power of privilege in the brethren doth prejudice the power of government in the elders, but they may sweetly agree together; as we may see in the example of the apostles, furnished with the greatest church power, who took in the concurrence and consent of the brethren in church administrations. Also that scripture, 2 *Cor.* ii. 9. and x. 6. do declare, That what the churches are to act and do in these matters, they were to do in a way of obedience, and that not only to the direction of the apostles, but also of their ordinary elders. *Acts* xiv. 15, 23. and vi. 2. 1 *Cor.* v. 4. 2 *Cor.* xxvi. 7. *Heb.* xiii. 17.

11. From the premises, namely, That the ordinary power of government belonging only to the elders, power of privilege remaineth with the brotherhood (as the power of judgment in matters of censure, and power of liberty in matters of liberty) it followeth, that in an organic church and right administration, all church acts proceed after the manner of a mixt administration, so as no church act can be consummated or perfected without the consent of both.

CHAP. XI.

Of the maintenance of church officers.

THE apostle concludes, that necessary and sufficient maintenance is due unto the ministers of the

word, from the law of nature and nations, from the law of *Moses*, the equity thereof, as also the rule of common reason. Moreover, the scripture doth not only call elders, labourers, and workmen, but also speaking of them doth say, that the labourer is worthy of his hire; and requires, that he which is taught in the word should communicate to him in all good things; and mentions it as an ordinance of the Lord, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel; and forbiddeth the muzzling the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. 1 *Cor.* ix. 14, 15. *Mat.* ix. 38. and x. 10. 1 *Tim.* v. 18. *Gal.* vi. 6. 1 *Cor.* ix. 9, 14.

2. The scriptures alledged, requiring this maintenance as a bounden duty and due debt, and not as a matter of alms and free gift, therefore people are not at liberty to do or not to do, what and when they please in this matter, no more than in any other commanded duty, and ordinance of the Lord; but ought of duty to minister of their carnal things, to them that labour among them in the word and doctrine, as well as they ought to pay any other workmen their wages, and to discharge and satisfy their other debts, or to submit themselves to observe any other ordinance of the Lord. *Rom.* xv. 27. 1 *Cor.* ix. 21.

3. The apostle (*Gal.* vi. 6.) enjoining that he which is taught communicate to him that teacheth in all good things, doth not leave it arbitrary, what or how much a man shall give, or in what proportion, but even the latter, as well as the former is prescribed and appointed by the Lord. 1 *Cor.* xvi. 2.

4. Not only members of churches, but all that are taught in the word, are to contribute unto him that teacheth in all good things. In case that congregations are defective in their contributions, the

deacons are to call upon them to do their duty; if their call sufficeth not, the church by her power is to require it of their members; and where church power, through the corruption of men, doth not or cannot attain the end, the magistrate is to see that the ministry be duly provided for, as appears from the commended example of *Nehemiah*. The magistrates are nursing-fathers and nursing-mothers, and stand charged with the custody of both tables; because it is better to prevent a scandal that it may not come, and easier also, than to remove it when it is given. It is most suitable to rule, that by the church's care each man should know his proportion according to rule, what he should do before he do it, that so his judgment and heart may be satisfied in what he doth, and just offence prevented in what is done. *Acts* vi. 3, 4. *Neh.* xiii. 11. *Isa.* xlix. 23. 2 *Cor.* viii. 13, 14.

CHAP. XII.

Of the admission of members into the church.

THE doors of the churches of Christ upon earth, do not by God's appointment stand so wide open, that all sorts of people, good or bad, may freely enter therein at their pleasure, but such as are admitted thereto as members ought to be examined and tried first, whether they be fit and meet to be received into church society or not. The eunuch of *Ethiopia*, before his admission was examined by *Philip*, whether he did believe on Jesus Christ with all his heart. The angel of the church at *Ephesus* is commended for trying such as said they were apostles and were not. There is like reason for trying

of them that profess to be believers. The officers are charged with the keeping of the doors of the church, and therefore are in a special manner to make trial of the fitness of such who enter. Twelve angels are set at the gates of the temple, lest such as were ceremonially unclean should enter thereinto. 2 *Chron.* xxiii. 19. *Mat.* xiii. 25. and xxii. 12. *Acts* viii. 37. *Rev.* ii. 2. *Acts* ix. 26. *Rev.* xxi. 12. 2 *Chron.* xxiii. 19.

2. The things which are requisite to be found in all church members, are repentance from sin, and faith in Jesus Christ; and there are the things whereof men are to be examined at their admission into the church, and which then they must profess and hold forth in such sort, as may satisfy rational charity that the things are there indeed. *John Baptist* admitted men to baptism confessing and bewailing their sins; and of others it is said, that they came, and confessed and shewed their deeds. *Acts* ii. 38 to 42. and viii. 37. *Mat.* iii. 6. *Acts* i. 9, 18.

3. The weakest measure of faith is to be accepted in those that desire to be admitted into the church because weak christians, if sincere, have the substance of that faith, repentance and holiness which is required in church members, and such have most need of the ordinances for their confirmation and growth in grace. The Lord Jesus would not quench the smoaking flax nor break the bruised reed, but gather the tender lambs in his arms and carry them gently in his bosom. Such charity and tenderness is to be used as the weakest christian, if sincere, may not be excluded nor discouraged. Severity of examination is to be avoided, *Rom.* xiv. 1. *Mat.* xii. 20. *Isa.* xl. 11.

4. In case any through excessive fear, or other infirmity, be unable to make their personal rela-

tion of their spiritual estate in public, it is sufficient that the elders have received private satisfaction, make relation thereof in public before the church, they testifying their assents thereunto, this being the way that tendeth most to edification. But where persons are of greater abilities, there it is most expedient that they make their relations and confessions personally with their own mouth, as *David* professeth of himself. *Psalm* lxvi. 16.

5. A personal and public confession and declaring of God's manner of working upon the soul is both lawful, expedient, and useful in sundry respects and upon sundry grounds. Those three thousand, *Acts* ii. 37, 41. before they were admitted by the apostles, did manifest that they were pricked in the heart at Peter's sermon, together with earnest desire to be delivered from their sins which now wounded their consciences and their ready receiving of the word of promise and exhortation. We are to be ready to render a reason of the hope that is in us, to every one that asketh us; therefore we must be able and ready upon any occasion to declare and shew our repentance for sin, faith unfeigned, and effectual calling, because these are the reasons of a well grounded hope. I have not hidden my righteousness from the great congregation. *Psalm* xl. 10. 1 *Pet.* iii. 15. *Heb.* xi. 1. *Eph.* i. 18.

6. This profession of faith and repentance, as it must be made by such at their admission, that were never in church society before; so nothing hindereth but the same way also be performed by such as have formerly been members of some other church, and the church to which they now join themselves as members may lawfully require the same. Those three thousand, *Acts* ii. which made their confession, were members of the church of the *Jews* before,

so were they that were baptized by *John*. Churches may err in their admission, and persons regularly admitted may fall into offence. Otherwise if churches might obtrude their members, or if church members might obtrude themselves upon other churches without due trial, the matter so requiring, both the liberty of churches would hereby be infringed in that they might not examine those concerning whose fitness for communion they were unsatisfied; and besides the infringing of their liberty the churches themselves would unavoidably be corrupted, and the ordinances defiled, whilst they might not refuse but must receive the unworthy, which is contrary unto the scripture, teaching that all churches are sisters and therefore equal. *Mat.* iii. 1, 6. *Gal.* ii. 4. 1 *Tim.* v. 24. *Cant.* viii. 8.

7. The like trial is to be required from such members of the church as were born in the same, or received their membership and were baptized in their infancy or minority, by virtue of the covenant of their parents, when being grown up unto years of discretion they shall desire to be made partakers of the Lord's supper; unto which, because holy things must not be given to the unworthy, therefore it is requisite that these as well as others, should come to their trial and examination, and manifest their faith and repentance by an open profession thereof, before they are received to the Lord's supper, and otherwise not to be admitted thereunto. Yet these church members that were so born or received in their childhood before they are capable of being made partakers of full communion, have many privileges which others, not church members, have not; they are in covenant with God, have the seal thereof upon them, viz. baptism; and so if not regenerated, yet are in a

more hopeful way of attaining regenerating grace, and all the spiritual blessings both of the covenant and seal: they are also under church-watch, and consequently subject to the reprehensions, admonitions, and censures thereof for their healing and amendment as need shall require. *Mat.* vii. 6. 1 *Cor.* xi. 27.

CHAP. XIII.

Of church members their removal from one church to another, and of recommendation and dismission.

CHURCH members may not remove or depart from the church, and so one from another as they please, nor without just and weighty cause, but ought to live and dwell together, forasmuch as they are commanded not to forsake the assembling themselves together. Such departure tends to the dissolution and ruin of the body, as the pulling of stones and pieces of timber from the building, and of members from the natural body tends to the destruction of the whole. *Heb.* x. 25.

2. It is therefore the duty of church members in such times and places where counsel may be had, to consult with the church whereof they were members about their removal, that accordingly they having their approbation, may be encouraged or otherwise desist. They who are joined with consent, should not depart without consent, except forced thereunto. *Prov.* xi 16.

3. If a member's departure be manifestly unsafe and sinful, the church may not consent thereunto; for in so doing they should not act in faith and should partake with him in his sin. If the case be doubtful

and the person not to be persuaded, it seemeth best to leave the matter unto God and not forcibly detain him. *Rom.* xiv. 23. 1 *Tim.* v. 22. *Acts* xxi. 14.

4. Just reasons for a member's removal of himself from the church, are, 1. If a man cannot continue without partaking in sin. 2. In case of personal persecution, so Paul departed from the disciples at Damascus. Also in case of general persecution when all are scattered. 3. In case of real, and not only pretended want of competent subsistence, a door being opened for better supply in another place, together with the means of spiritual edification. In these or like cases a member may lawfully remove, and the church cannot lawfully detain him. *Eph.* v. 11. *Acts* ix. 25, 29, 30. and viii. 1. *Neh.* xiii. 20.

5. To separate from a church, either out of contempt of their holy fellowship or out of covetousness, or for greater enlargements, with just grief to the church; or out of schism, or want of love, and out of a spirit of contention in respect of some unkindness, or some evil only conceived, or indeed in the church, which might and should be tolerated and held with a spirit of meekness and of which evil the church is not yet convinced (though perhaps himself be) nor admonished; for these or the like reasons to withdraw from public communion in word, or seals, or censures is unlawful and sinful. 2 *Tim.* iv. 10. *Rom.* xvi. 17. *Jude* v. 19. *Eph.* iv. 2, 3. *Col.* iii. 13. *Gal.* vi. 1, 2.

6. Such members as have orderly removed their habitation ought to join themselves unto the church in order where they do inhabit, if it may be; otherwise they can neither perform the duties nor receive the privileges of members. Such an example tolerated in some is apt to corrupt others, which

if many should follow, would threaten the dissolution and confusion of churches, contrary to the scripture. *Isa.* lvi. 8. *Acts* ix. 26. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 33.

7. Order requires that a member thus removing, have letters testimonial, and of dismission from the church whereof he yet is, unto the church whereunto he desireth to be joined, lest the church should be deluded; that the church may receive him in faith, and not be corrupted by receiving deceivers and false brethren; until the person dismissed be received into another church he ceaseth not by his letters or dismission to be a member of the church whereof he was, the church cannot make a member no member but by excommunication. *Acts* xviii. 27.

8. If a member be called to remove only for a time, where a church is, letters of recommendation are requisite and sufficient for communion with that church in the ordinances and in their watch; as Phebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea, had letters written for her to the church at Rome, that she might be received as becometh saints. *Rom.* xvi. 1, 2. 2 *Cor.* iii. 1.

9. Such letters of recommendation and dismission were written for Apollos, for Marcus to the Colossians, for Phebe to the Romans, for sundry others to other churches. And the apostle telleth us that some persons, not sufficiently known otherwise, have special need of such letters, though he for his part had no need thereof. The use of them is to be a benefit and help to the party for whom they are written and for the furthering of his receiving amongst the saints in the place whereto he goeth, and the due satisfaction of them in their receiving of him. *Acts* xviii. 27. *Col.* iv. 10. *Rom.* xvi. 1. 2 *Cor.* iii. 1.

CHAP. XIV.

Of excommunication and other censures.

THE censures of the church are appointed by Christ for the preventing, removing, and healing of offences in the church; for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for the deterring others from the like offences; for purging out the leaven which may infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honour of Christ, and of his church, and the holy profession of the gospel, and for preventing of the wrath of God that may justly fall upon the church if they should suffer his covenant and the seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders. 1 *Tim.* v. 20. *Deut.* xvii. 12, 13. *Jude* v. 19. *Deut.* xiii. 11. 1 *Cor.* v. 6. *Rom.* ii. 24, *Rev.* ii. 14, 15, 16, 20.

2. If an offence be private, one brother offending another, the offender is to go and acknowledge his repentance for it unto his offended brother, who is then to forgive him; but if the offender neglect or refuse to do it, the brother offended is to go and convince and admonish him of it, between themselves privately: If thereupon the offender be brought to repent of his offence, the admonisher hath won his brother; but if the offender hear not his brother, the brother offended is to take with him one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established, whether the word of admonition, if the offender receive it; or the word of complaint, if he refuse it; for if he refuse it, the offended brother is by the mouth of the elders to tell the church, and if he hear the church, and declare the same by penitent con-

fession, he is recovered and gained; and if the church discern him to be willing to hear, yet not fully convinced of his offence, as in case of heresy, they are to dispense to him in a public admonition, which declaring the offender to lie under the public offence of the church doth thereby withhold or suspend him from the holy fellowship of the Lord's supper, till his offence be removed by penitent confession. If he still continue obstinate, they are to cast him out by excommunication, *Mat.* v. 23, 24. *Luke* xvii. 3, 4. *Mat.* xviii. 15, 16, 17. *Tit.* iii. 10.

3. But if the offence be more public at first, and of a more heinous and criminal nature, to wit, such as are condemned by the light of nature, then the church, without such gradual proceedings is to cast out the offender from their holy communion for the further mortifying of his sins and the healing of his soul in the day of the Lord Jesus. 1 *Cor.* v. 4, 5, 11.

4. In dealing with an offender great care is to be taken that we be neither overstrict or rigorous, nor too indulgent or remiss; our proceeding herein ought to be with a spirit of meekness, considering ourselves, least we also be tempted; and that the best of us have need of much forgiveness from the Lord. Yet the winning and healing of the offender's soul, being the end of these endeavors, we must not daub with untempered mortar, nor heal the wounds of our brethren slightly. On some have compassion, others save with fear. *Gal.* vi. 1. *Mat.* xviii. 34, 35. *Ezek.* xiii. 10.

5. While the offender remains excommunicate, the church is to refrain from all member-like communion with him in spiritual things, and also from all familiar communion with him in civil things, further than the necessity of natural, domestical or civil relations do require, and are therefore to forbear

to eat and drink with him, that he may be ashamed. *Mat.* xviii. 17. 1 *Cor.* v. 11. 2 *Thess.* iii. 6, 14.

6. Excommunication being a spiritual punishment, it doth not prejudice the excommunicate in nor deprive him of his civil rights, and therefore toucheth not princes or other magistrates in point of their civil dignity or authority, and the excommunicate being but as a publican and a heathen, (heathens being lawfully permitted to come to hear the word in church assemblies) we acknowledge therefore the like liberty of hearing the word may be permitted to persons excommunicate, that is permitted unto heathen. And because we are not without hope of his recovery, we are not to account him as an enemy but to admonish him as a brother. 1 *Cor.* xiv. 24, 25. 2 *Thess.* iii. 14.

7. If the Lord sanctify the censure to the offender, so as by the grace of Christ he doth testify his repentance with humble confession of his sins, and judging of himself, giving glory unto God, the church is then to forgive him and to comfort him, and to restore him to the wonted brotherly communion which formerly he enjoyed with them. 2 *Cor.* ii. 7, 8.

8. The suffering of the profane or scandalous livers to continue in fellowship and partake in the sacraments is doubtless a great sin in those that have power in their hands to redress it and do it not: Nevertheless, inasmuch as Christ and his apostles in their times, and the prophets and other godly in theirs, did lawfully partake of the Lord's commanded ordinances in the *Jewish* church, and neither taught nor practised separation from the same, though unworthy ones were permitted therein, and inasmuch as the faithful in the church of *Corinth*, wherein were many unworthy persons and practi-

ces, are never commanded to absent themselves from the sacraments because of the same ; therefore the godly in like cases are not presently to separate. *Rev.* ii. 14, 15, 20. *Mat.* xxiii. 3. *Acts* iii. 1. 1 *Cor.* vi. and xv. 12.

9. As separation from such a church wherein profane and scandalous persons are tolerated is not presently necessary ; so for the members thereof, otherwise unworthy, hereupon to abstain from communicating with such a church in the participation of the sacraments is unlawful. For as it were unreasonable for an innocent person to be punished for the faults of others, wherein he hath no hand, and whereunto he gave no consent, so it is more unreasonable that a godly man should neglect duty and punish himself, in not coming for his portion in the blessings of the seals as he ought, because others are suffered to come that ought not ; especially considering that himself doth neither consent to their sins, nor to their approaching to the ordinance in their sin, nor to the neglect of others who should put them away and do not ; but on the contrary doth heartily mourn for these things, modestly and seasonably stir up others to do their duty. If the church cannot be reformed, they may use their liberty as is specified chap. 13, sect. 4. But this all the godly are bound unto even every one to do his endeavor, according to his power and place, that the unworthy may be duly proceeded against by the church to whom this matter doth appertain. 2 *Chron.* xxx. 18. *Gen.* xviii. 25. *Ezek.* ix. 4.

CHAP. XV.

Of the communion of churches one with another.

ALTHOUGH churches be distinct and therefore may not be confounded one with another, and equal, and therefore have no dominion one over another; yet all the churches ought to preserve church communion one with another, because they are all united unto Christ, not only as a mystical but as a political head, whence is derived a communion suitable thereunto. *Rev.* i. 4. *Cant.* viii. 8. *Rom.* xvi. 16. 1 *Cor.* xvi. 19. *Acts* xv. 23. *Rev.* ii. 1.

2. The communion of churches is exercised sundry ways. 1. By way of mutual care, in taking thought for one another's welfare. 2. By way of consultation one with another, when we have occasion to require the judgment and counsel of other churches, touching any person or cause wherewith they may be better acquainted than ourselves. As the church at *Antioch* consulted with apostles and elders of the church at *Jerusalem* about the question of circumcision of the Gentiles, and about the false teachers that broached that doctrine. In which case, when any church wanteth light or peace amongst themselves, it is a way of communion of churches, according to the word to meet together, by their elders and other messengers in a synod, to consider and argue the points in doubt or difference; and having found out the way of truth and peace, to commend the same by their letter and messengers to the churches whom the same may concern. But if a church be rent with divisions among themselves, or lie under any open scandal and yet refuse to consult with other churches

for healing or removing of the same, it is matter of just offence both to the Lord Jesus and to other churches, as bewraying too much want of mercy and faithfulness, not to seek to bind up the breaches and wounds of the church and brethren; and therefore the state of such a church calleth aloud upon other churches to exercise a fuller act of brotherly communion, to wit, by way of admonition. 3. A third way of communion of churches is by way of admonition, to wit, in case any public offence be found in a church, which either discern not or are slow in proceeding to use means for the removing and healing thereof. *Paul* had no authority over *Peter*, yet when he saw *Peter* not walking with a right foot he publickly rebuked him before the church. Though churches have no more authority one over another, than one apostle had over another, yet as one apostle might admonish another, so may one church admonish another and yet without usurpation. In which case, if the church that lieth under offence, do not hearken to the church that doth admonish her, the church is to acquaint other neighbour churches with that offence which the offending church still lieth under, together with the neglect of their brotherly admonition given unto them, whereupon those other churches are to join in seconding the admonition formerly given them; and if still the offending church continue in obstinacy and impenitency they may forbear communion with them, and are to proceed to make use of the help of a synod or council of neighbour churches walking orderly (if a greater cannot conveniently be had) for their conviction. If they hear not the synod, the synod having declared them too obstinate, particular churches approving and accepting the judgment of the synod, are to de-

clare the sentence of non-communion respectively concerning them; and thereupon, out of religious care to keep their own communion pure, they must justly withdraw themselves from participation with them at the Lord's table, and from such other acts of holy communion as the communion of churches doth otherwise allow and require. Nevertheless, if any members of such a church as live under public offence, do not consent to the offence of the church, but do in due sort bear witness against it, they are still to be received to wonted communication; for it is not equal that the innocent should suffer with the offensive. Yea, furthermore, if such innocent members, after due waiting in the use of all good means for the healing of the offence of their own church, shall at last with the allowance of the council of neighbour churches withdraw from the fellowship of their own church and offer themselves to the fellowship of another, we judge it lawful for the other church to receive them (being otherwise fit) as if they had been orderly dismissed to them from their own church. 4. A fourth way of communion of churches is by way of participation. The members of one church occasionally coming to another we willingly admit them to partake with us at the Lord's table, it being the seal of our communion not only with Christ, nor only with the members of our own churches, but also of all the churches of the saints; in which regard we refuse not to baptize their children presented to us, if either their own minister be absent, or such a fruit of holy fellowship be desired with us. In like case such churches as are furnished with more ministers than one, do willingly afford one of their own ministers to supply the place of an absent or sick minister of another church for a needful season. 5. A

fifth way of church communion is by way of recommendation, when the member of one church hath occasion to reside in another church, if but for a season, we commend him to their watchful fellowship by letters of recommendation, but if he be called to settle his abode there we commit him according to his desire to the fellowship of their covenant by letters of dismission. 6. A sixth way of church communion is in case of *need,* to minister relief and succour one unto another, either of able members to furnish them with officers, or of outward support to the necessities of poorer churches, as did the churches of the *Gentiles* contribute liberally to the poor saints at *Jerusalem.* *Cant.* viii. 8. *Acts* xv. 2, 6, 22, 23. *Ezek.* xxxiv. 4. *Gal.* ii. 11 to 14. *Mat.* xviii. 15, 16, 17. *by proportion.* *Gen.* xviii. 25. 1 *Cor.* xii. 13. *Rom.* xvi. 1. *Acts* xviii. 27. and xi. 22, 29. *Rom.* xiii. 26, 27.

3. When a company of believers purpose to gather into a church fellowship it is requisite for their safer proceeding and the maintaining the communion of churches, that they signify their intent unto the neighbour churches, walking according unto the order of the gospel, and desire their presence, and help, and right hand of fellowship, which they ought readily to give unto them when there is no just cause to except against their proceedings. *Gal.* ii. 1, 2, and 9, *by proportion.*

4. Besides the several ways of communion, there is also a way of propagation of churches when a church shall grow too numerous, it is a way and fit season to propagate one church out of another, by sending forth such of their members as are willing to remove, and to procure some officers to them as may enter with them into church estate amongst themselves. As bees, when the hive is too full,

issue forth by swarms and are gathered into other hives, so the churches of Christ may do the same upon like necessity; and therein hold forth to them the right hand of fellowship, both in their gathering into a church and in the ordination of their officers. *Isa.* xl. 20. *Cant.* viii. 8, 9.

CHAP. XVI.

Of Synods.

SYNODS orderly assembled and rightly proceeding according to the pattern, *Acts* xv. we acknowledge as the ordinance of Christ; and though not absolutely necessary to the being, yet many times, through the iniquity of men and perverseness of times, necessary to the well-being of churches, for the establishment of truth and peace therein. *Acts* xv. 2 to 15.

2. Synods being spiritual and ecclesiastical assemblies, are therefore made up of spiritual and ecclesiastical causes. The next sufficient cause of them under Christ, is the power of the churches, sending forth their elders and other messengers, who being met together in the name of Christ, are the matter of a synod: and they in arguing, debating, and determining matters of religion according to the word, and publishing the same to the churches it concerneth, do put forth the proper and formal acts of a synod, to the conviction of errors and heresies, and the establishment of truth and peace in the churches, which is the end of a synod. *Acts* xv. 2, 3, 6, 7 to 23, 31. and xvi. 4, 15.

3. Magistrates have power to call a synod, by calling to the churches to send forth their elders

and other messengers, to counsel and assist them in matters of religion; but yet the constituting of a synod is a church act, and may be transacted by the churches even when civil magistrates may be enemies to churches and church assemblies. 2 *Chron.* xxix. 4, 5 to 11. *Acts* xv.

4. It belongeth unto synods and councils to debate and determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience; to clear from the word holy directions for the holy worship of God, and good government of the church; to bear witness against maladministration and corruption in doctrine or manners in any particular church; and to give directions for the reformation thereof; not to exercise church censures in way of discipline, nor any act of church authority or jurisdiction, which that presidential synod did forbear. *Acts* xv. 1, 2, 6, 7. 1 *Chron.* xv. 13. 2 *Chron.* xxix. 6, 7. *Acts.* xv. 24. 28, 29.

5. The synod's directions and determinations so far as consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement therewith (which is the principal ground thereof, and without which they bind not all) but also secondarily for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God appointed thereunto in his word. *Acts* xv.

6. Because it is difficult if not impossible for many churches to come together in one place, in all their members universally; therefore they may assemble by their delegates or messengers as the church at *Antioch* went not all to *Jerusalem*, but some select men for that purpose. Because none are or should be more fit to know the state of the churches, nor to advise of ways for the good thereof, than elders; therefore it is fit that in the choice of the messengers for such assemblies they have

special respect unto such; yet inasmuch as not only Paul and Barnabas, but certain others also were sent to *Jerusalem*, from *Antioch*, and when they were come to *Jerusalem* not only the apostles and elders, but other brethren also do assemble and meet about the matter; therefore synods are to consist both of elders and other church members endued with gifts and sent by the churches, not excluding the presence of any brethren in the churches. *Acts* xv. 2, 22, 23.

CHAP. XVII.

Of the civil magistrate's power in matters ecclesiastical.

IT is lawful, profitable, and necessary for christians to gather themselves together into church estate, and therein to exercise all the ordinances of Christ, according unto the word, although the consent of the magistrate could not be had thereunto; because the apostles and christians in their time did frequently thus practise, when the magistrates being all of them *Jewish* or *Pagan* and most persecuting enemies would give no countenance or consent to such matters. *Acts* ii. 41, 47. and iv. 1, 2, 3.

2. Church government stands in no opposition to civil government of commonwealths, nor any way intrencheth upon the authority of civil magistrates in their jurisdiction; nor any whit weakeneth their hands in governing, but rather strengtheneth them, furthereth the people in yielding more hearty and conscionable obedience unto them, whatsoever some ill affected persons to the ways of Christ have suggested, to alienate the affection of

kings and princes from the ordinances of Christ; as if the kingdom of Christ in his church could not rise and stand without the falling and weakening of their government, which is also of Christ; whereas the contrary is most true, that they may both stand together and flourish, the one being helpful unto the other in their distinct and due administrations. *John* xviii. 36. *Acts* xxv. 8. *Isa.* xlix. 23.

3. The power and authority of magistrates is not for the restraining of churches or any other good works, but for helping in and furthering thereof: and therefore the consent and countenance of magistrates, when it may be had, is not to be slighted or lightly esteemed; but on the contrary it is part of that honour due to christian magistrates to desire and crave their consent and approbation therein, which being obtained, the churches may then proceed in their way with more encouragement and comfort. *Rom.* xiii. 4. 1 *Tim.* ii. 2.

4. It is not in the power of magistrates to compel their subjects to become church members, and to partake at the Lord's table; for the priests are reproved that brought unworthy ones into the sanctuary: Then as it was unlawful for the priest, so it is as unlawful to be done by civil magistrates, those whom the church is to cast out if they were in; the magistrate ought not to thrust them into the church, nor to hold them therein. *Ezek.* xliv. 7, 9. 1 *Cor.* v. 11.

5. As it is unlawful for church officers to meddle with the sword of the magistrates, so it is unlawful for the magistrate to meddle with the work proper to church officers. The acts of *Moses* and *David*, who were not only princes but prophets, were extraordinary, therefore not imitable. Against such usurpation, the Lord witnessed by

smiting *Uzziah* with leprosy for presuming to offer incense. *Mat.* ii. 25, 26. 2 *Chron.* xxvi. 16, 17.

6. It is the duty of the magistrate to take care of matters of religion, and to improve his civil authority for the observing of the duties commanded in the first, as well as for observing of the duties commanded in the second table. They are called Gods. The end of the magistrate's office is not only the quiet and peaceable life of the subject in matters of righteousness and honesty, but also in matters of godliness, yea, of all godliness. *Moses*, *Joshua*, *David*, *Solomon*, *Asa*, *Jehosaphat*, *Hezekiah*, *Josiah*, are much commended by the Holy Ghost for the putting forth their authority in matters of religion: On the contrary, such kings as have been failing this way, are frequently taxed and reproved by the Lord. And not only the kings of *Judah*, but also *Job*, *Nehemiah*, the king of *Nineveh*, *Darius*, *Artaxerxes*, *Nebuchadnezzar*, whom none looked at as types of Christ, (though were it so, they were no place for any just objection) are commended in the book of God, for exercising their authority this way. *Psal.* lxxxii. 8. 1 *Tim.* ii. 1, 2. 1 *Kings* xv. 14. and xxii. 43. 2 *Kings* xii. 3. and xiv. 4. and xv. 35. 1 *Kings* xx. 42. *Job* xxix. 25. and xxxi. 26, 28. *Neh.* xiii. *John* iii. 7. *Ezra* vii. *Dan.* iii. 29.

7. The objects of the power of the magistrate are not things merely inward, and so not subject to his cognizance and view, as unbelief, hardness of heart, erroneous opinions not vented, but only such things as are acted by the outward man; neither is their power to be exercised in commanding such acts of the outward man, and punishing the neglect thereof, as are but mere inventions and devices of men, but about such acts as are commanded and

forbidden in the word; yea, such as the word doth clearly determine, though not always clearly to the judgment of the magistrate or others, yet clearly in itself. In these he of right ought to put forth his authority, though oft-times actually he doth it no 1 *Kings* xx. 28, 42.

8. Idolatry, blasphemy, heresy, venting corrupt and pernicious opinions that destroy the foundation, open contempt of the word preached, profanation of the Lord's day, disturbing the peaceable administration and exercise of the worship and holy things of God and the like, are to be restrained and punished by civil authority. *Deut.* xiii. 1 *Kings* xx. 28, 42. *Dan.* iii. 29. *Zech.* xiii. 3. *Neh.* xiii. 31. 1 *Tim.* ii. 2. *Rom.* xiii. 4.

9. If any church, one or more shall grow schismatical, rending itself from the communion of other churches, or shall walk incorrigibly or obstinately in any corrupt way of their own, contrary to the rule of the word; in such case the magistrate is to put forth his coercive power as the matter shall require. The tribes on this side Jordan intended to make war against the other tribes for building the altar of witness, whom they suspected to have turned away therein from following of the LORD. *Josh.* xxii.

APPENDIX.

Being some collections for the information of those that are not acquainted with the principles and practices of the first and most eminent leaders in the churches of CHRIST *in New England.*

THE platform of church discipline was agreed on and consented unto by many great, learned and pious persons, from the four famous colonies in New-England, assembled in the Synod at Cambridge, 1648. Something of which may be read in a late print, entitled, "A testimony to the order of the gospel in the churches of New-England."

The deservedly famous and reverend Mr. *John Wilson*, pastor, and *John Cotton*, teacher of the first church of Christ in Boston, were two of those worthies that composed the platform of church discipline.

The reverend Mr. *John Norton*, teacher of the said church in Boston, in his election sermon, May 22, 1661, page 12, gives this advice, "take care that the order of the gospel may have a free passage in the churches; I mean that our practice may effectually answer our doctrine, in that book entitled, the platform of church discipline."

And in his last sermon, preached on his weekly lecture, April 2, 1663, a little before his death, page 37. "Remember that we have the pattern in the mount, I mean we have the scripture as a rule, and you have the platform of church discipline given to you in way of counsel, as the confession of our faith to this way of church government: you know in what manner it was that which, for the substance of it, owns the cause congregational: If any are departed from it let them look to it."

The reverend Mr. *John Davenport*, in his catechism printed anno 1669, for the use of the first church in Boston, of which he was then pastor, shows his concurrence with the platform of church discipline in matters relating to church government.

The reverend Mr. *John Oxenbridge*, pastor of said church by his practice, manifested his consent to the way of church government, as it is stated in the platform of church discipline: and in his election sermon, in May, 1671, declared his agreement with the principles of purity and power of the churches.

The reverend Mr. *James Allen*, teacher of said church, in his election sermon, May 28, 1679, page 10, 11, having taken notice of the platform of church discipline, as manifesting the judgment of the ministers of New-England, asserting the authoritative rule of the elders, with the liberty of brethren, expresseth himself thus, "though the judgment of the best should not be looked upon as scripture canons, nor bind any further than it is found agreeing with the word of God, by which it ought to be tried; yet I think I may safely say that is a clearer judgment of the mind of God in the

scripture, in that matter, than can be expected in this next generation. It is true, in improvements of natural light, that may be increased by industry, and those that stand upon others' shoulders may see further than they did upon whose shoulders they stand, but it is not so in spiritual things, the further knowledge of which depends upon revelation, *Eph.* i. 17. *Psal.* xxv. 9.

The reverend and learned Mr. *Urian Oakes*, president of Harvard College and pastor of the church of Christ in Cambridge, in his election sermon May 7, 1673, p. 48, declared himself as follows, "I beg that we may keep the king's highway, the way that CHRIST himself hath cast up for us, and that our worthy predecessors have travelled in before us, the way that hath been stated, not in the private models of some fanciful and conceited men, but in the *Platform of Church Discipline*; the truest understanding of these things is from the Platform deduced out of the word of GOD."

At a SYNOD at Boston, New-England, September 10, 1679,

IT was put to vote, whether the assembly did approve of *The Platform of Church Discipline?* And both elders and brethren did unanimously lift up their hands in the affirmative, not one appearing when the vote was propounded, in the negative, but it jointly passed in these words, "A synod of the churches in the province of the Massachusetts, being called by the honored General Court to convene at Boston, the 10th of September, 1679, having read and considered *The Platform of Church Discipline*, agreed upon by the Synod assembled at Cambridge, 1648, do unanimously approve of the said Platform, for the substance of it, desiring that the churches may continue stedfast in *the order of the gospel*, according to what is therein declared from the word of GOD. In a print, entitled, *The necessity of reformation*, &c."

At a general meeting of ministers in Boston, New-England, May 27, 1697,

SUNDRY reverend and worthy ministers signed an instrument, where they declared their full purpose, by the help of the Lord, to maintain in their several places the purity, and fellowship, and liberties of the churches, &c. In a print, entitled, *Thirty important questions resolved*, &c.

Col. ii. 6. *As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him.*

Eph. iv. Part of the 14th verse. *Be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.*

Gal. v. 1. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.*

A TESTIMONY

To the order of the gospel, in the churches of New-England: left in the hands of the churches, by the two most aged ministers of the gospel yet surviving in the country.

ABOVE *seventy years* have passed away, since one of us and above *sixty*, since the other of us came into *New-England, and having obtained help from God we continue to this day.*

We are therefore capable to make some comparison, between the condition of the churches, when they were first erected in this country, and the condition into which they are now *fallen*, and more *falling* every day.

But we wish, that in making this *comparison*, we had not cause to take the place and the part of those *old men*, that saw the *young men shouting aloud for joy, at the new temple*, Ezra iii. 12. *Ancient men that had seen the first house; when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice.*

2. We are under a daily expectation of our call to appear before our Lord Jesus Christ; and we have reason to be above all things concerned, that we may *give up our account with joy* unto him. That we may be the better able to do so, we judge it necessary for us to leave in the hands of the churches a brief testimony to *the cause of God and his people* in this land. And this the rather, because we are sensible that there is risen and rising among us, a number who not only forsake the *right ways of the Lord*, wherein these holy churches have walked, but also labour to carry away as many others with them as they can.

We are also informed that many *younger men* of great worth, and and hearty friends unto the *church-state* of the country, scarce know what interpretation to put upon it; but find it a sensible disadvantage unto them that the *elder men* are so silent and remiss upon the manifest occasions, that call aloud for us to open our *mouth* in the cause of churches that we should be loth to see *lead unto destruction.*

3. We that saw the persons who from four famous colonies, assembled in the *synod* that agreed on our *Platform of Church Discipline* cannot forget their excellent character. They were men of great renown in the nation from whence the *Laudian Persecution* exiled them; their learning, their holiness, their gravity struck all men that knew them with admiration. They were Timothies in their houses, Chrysostomes in their pulpits, Augustines in their disputations. The prayers, the studies, the humble enquiries with which they sought after the mind of God were as likely to prosper as any men's upon earth. And the sufferings wherein they were confessors for the name and the truth of the Lord Jesus Christ, add unto the arguments which would persuade us that our gracious Lord would reward and honour them, with communicating much of his truth un-

to them. The famous Brightman had foretold, *Clariorem lucem adhac Solitudo dabit, &c.* God would yet reveal more of the true church-state unto some of his faithful servants, whom he would send into a wilderness that he might there have communion with them. And it was eminently accomplished in what was done for and by the *men of God*, that first erected churches for him in this American wilderness.

We do therefore in the first place earnestly testify that if any who are given to change do rise up to unhinge the *well established churches* in this land, it will be the duty and interest of the churches to examine whether the *men of this trespass* are more prayerful, more watchful, more zealous, more patient, more heavenly, more universally conscientious, and harder students, and better scholars, and more willing to be informed and advised than those great and good men who left unto the churches what they now enjoy; if they be not so it will be wisdom for the children to forbear pulling down with their own hands the houses of God, which were built by their wiser fathers, until they have better satisfaction.

It is not yet forgot by some surviving ear-witnesses of it, that when the *Synod* had finished the *Platform of Church Discipline*, they did with an extraordinary elevation of soul and voice then sing together *the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb*, in the fifteenth chapter of the Revelation: God forbid, that in the loss of that holy discipline, there should be hereafter occasion to sing about breaking down the carved work of the houses of God with axes and hammers; or take up the eightieth psalm for our lamentations.

4. It was a joy unto us to see and read a book which the reverend president of our college lately published, under the title of "The order of the gospel, professed and practised by the churches of Christ in *New-England*:" a book most highly needful, and useful and seasonable, a most elaborate and well composed work, and well suited unto those two worthy designs; 1st. the maintaining the congregational church discipline; and 2dly, the maintaining the sweet spirit of charity and communion towards the reforming presbyterians, who are our united brethren. But we must here withal testify, that in that worthy book there is nothing obtruded upon the churches but what they who were here capable of observing what was done sixty years ago, do know to have been professed and practised in the churches of New-England; (except in one or two) then and ever since until of late, some who were not then born have suggested otherwise. Yea, 'tis well known, that the churches then publickly maintained those principles in several judicious discourses, which were never confuted by any men whatever unto this present time. And we do therefore most heartily commend that book of the order of the gospel, unto the perusal and acceptance of the churches of the Lord.

5. It was one of the songs (as the Jewish masters tell us) in the feast of tabernacles, *Blessed be our youth, which have not made our old men ashamed.* But alas, we that are old men must confess ourselves ashamed when we see after what manner some of our

youth, have expressed and behaved themselves, and with what scoffs they have assaulted the order of the gospel in some things lately published and scattered about the country; which have been so far from answering the arguments brought for our church order, that they have been by the wonderful providence of Christ made useful to establish the minds of serious christians in those very points which they see so weakly and so rudely opposed. We have taught our children in the catechism, called Milk for Babes, that there is to be a covenant of God in the churches, wherein they give up themselves, first unto the Lord to be his people, and then to the elders and brethren of the churches to set forward the worship of God and mutual edification. And it cannot but be grievous unto us, as well as unto all serious christians, for my children of New-England scornfully to vomit up their milk with scoffs upon that and other sacred actions in our churches too horrible to be repeated.

If they take away from us one of the songs among the Jews, they would however leave us room for one of the sighs uttered by a rabbi among them; the worst fruit which we eat in our youth excelled the best we now eat in our old age, for in our days the world is changed.

6. Concerning all sinful attempts to overturn the order of the gospel hitherto upheld in the churches of New-England, and to spoil that glorious work of God, which we have seen him doing, with a series of remarkable providences, in erecting such congregational churches in these ends of the earth; we would now therefore bear our testimony that they are doubtless displeasing to our Lord Jesus Christ, who walks in the midst of these golden candlesticks, and they will prove bitterness in the latter end.

And this we declare with the more concern upon our minds because of an observation, so plain, that he that runs may read it.

It is too observable that the power of godliness is exceedingly decaying and expiring in the country; and one great point in the decay of the power of godliness, is men's growing weary of the congregational church discipline which is evidently calculated to maintain it.

If that church discipline were more thoroughly and vigorously kept alive, even by those that make profession of it, it might be hoped, that the Lord would sanctify it, for the revival of all godliness in the land.

But if this church discipline come to be given up, we think it our duty to leave this warning with the churches that probably the apostacy will not stop there; for the same spirit that will dispose the next generation to change their way in one point, will dispose them to more and more changes (even in doctrine and worship as well as in manners) until it may be feared, the candlestick will quickly be removed out of its place.

7. We do therefore humbly propose it, unto all the churches, as a great expedient for the preservation of our church state, that more prayer, even whole days of prayer set apart for that end, with other appointed means, may be used in the churches to obtain from the Lord the out-pourings of the spirit of grace on the rising generation. If so rich a blessing were obtained, (and our heavenly

Father will give his holy Spirit unto them that ask it) and if the rising generation might be a praying, pious, devout, and regenerate generation, there will not be such danger as now there is, of their easily giving away the precious legacy which their fathers, now beholding the face of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory, left unto them, or of their doting upon innovations fatal to the order of the gospel among us.

8. Now as aged Joseph said, I die, and God will surely visit you: even so, we the unworthy servants of the Lord, whose age bids us every day look for death and our call to that world, where to be is by far the best of all, do conclude with our prayers unto the Lord for these holy churches, that he would surely visit them, and grant much of his gracious presence and spirit in the midst of them; and raise up from time to time those who may be happy instruments of bringing down the hearts of the parents into the children. The Lord bless these his churches, and keep them stedfast, both in the faith and in the order of the gospel, and be with them, as he was with their fathers, and never leave them nor forsake them.

JOHN HIGGINSON.

WILLIAM HUBBARD.

POSTSCRIPT.

THAT our testimony to the old principles of New England may be the more distinctly apprehended, we recommend unto consideration three pages in the life of Mr. *John Cotton*, written by his grandson, Mr. *Cotton Mather*, p. 33, 34, 35.

"Now that the world may know the first principles of New-England, it must be known that until the Platform of church discipline, published by a *Synod* in the year 1648, next unto the *Bible*, which was the professed, perpetual, and only directory of these churches, they had no platform of their church government, more exact than their famous *John Cotton's* well known book of the keys; which book endeavours to lay out the just lines and bounds of all church power, and so defines the matter, that as in the state there is a dispersion of powers into several hands which are to concur into all acts of common concernment, from whence arises the healthy constitution of a commonwealth: in like sort, he assigns the powers in the church, unto several subjects, wherein the united light of scripture and of nature, have placed them with a very satisfactory distribution.

"He asserts, that a presbyterated society of the faithful, hath within itself a complete power of self-reformation, or if you will of self-preservation; and may within itself, manage its own choices of officers, and censures of delinquents. Now a special statute law of our Lord having excepted women and children from enjoying any part of this power, he finds only elders and brethren to be the constitu-

ent members, who may act in such a sacred corporation; the elders he finds the first subject entrusted with government; the brethren endowed with privilege, in so much that though the elders are to rule the church, and without them there can be no elections, admissions, or excommunications, and they have a negative upon the acts of the fraternity, as well as 'tis they only that have the power of authoritative preaching and administering the sacraments: Yet the brethren have such a liberty that without their consent, nothing of common concernment may be imposed upon them. Nevertheless, because particular churches of elders and brethren may abuse their powers, with manifold miscarriages, he asserts the necessary communion of churches in *Synods*, who have authority to determine, declare, and enjoin such things as may rectify the mal-administrations of any disorders, dissentions, and confusions of the congregations which fall under their cognizance. But still so as to leave unto the particular churches themselves, the formal acts, which are to be done pursuant unto the advice of the council; upon the scandalous and obstinate refusal whereof, the council may determine to withdraw communion from them, as from those who will not be counselled, against a notorious mismanagement of the jurisdiction which the Lord Jesus Christ has given them. This was the design of that judicious treatise, wherein was contained the substance of our church discipline; and whereof we have one remarkable thing to relate as we go along. That great person who afterwards proved one of the greatest scholars, divines, and writers in his age, then under prejudices of conversation, set himself to write a confutation of this very treatise of the Keys; but having made a considerable progress in his undertaking, such was the strength of this unanswerable book, that instead of confuting it, it conquered him; and this book of the Keys, was happily so blessed of God for the conveyance of congregational principles into the now opened mind of this learned man, that he not only wrote in defence of Mr. *Cotton*, but also exposed himself to more than a little sorrow and labour all his days for the maintaining of those principles. Upon which occasion the words of the Doctor (Owen in his review of the true nature of schism) are, This way of impartial examining all things by the word, and laying aside all prejudicate respect unto persons, or present traditions is a course that I would admonish all to beware of, who would avoid the danger of being made what they call independents. Having said thus much of that book, all that we shall add concerning it is, that the eminent Mr. *Rutherford* himself, in his treatise entitled, "A survey of the spiritual antichrist." has these words, "Mr. *Cotton* in his treatise of the Keys of the kingdom of heaven, is well found in our way, if he had given some more power to assemblies, and in some lesser points."

JOHN HIGGINSON.

WILLIAM HUBBARD.

THE

ORIGINAL

CONSTITUTION, ORDER AND FAITH

OF

THE NEW-ENGLAND CHURCHES.

Comprising

THE PLATFORM

OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Adopted in 1648.

PROPOSITIONS RESPECTING

BAPTISM AND CONSOCIATION OF CHURCHES

Answered by the Synod of 1662.

A CONFESSION OF FAITH,

Adopted by the New-England Churches 1680.

with an

APPENDIX

Containing the Testimony of Rev. Messrs. HIGGINSON, and HUBBARD, to the order the Churches, and other minor and valuable documents.

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1812

Synod of Boston 1662.

THE

ANSWER

OF THE

ELDERS and other MESSENGERS of the Churches, assembled at *Boston*, in the year 1662.

To the QUESTIONS propounded to them by order of the honorable General Court.

Question 1. WHO are the subjects of Baptism?

Answer. The answer may be given in the following Propositions, briefly confirmed from the Scriptures.

1. They that according to scripture, are members of the visible church, are the subjects of baptism.

2. The members of the visible church according to scripture, are confederate visible believers, in particular churches, and their infant seed, i e. children in minority, whose next parents, one or both, are in covenant.

3. The infant-seed of confederate visible believers, are members of the same church with their parents, and when grown up, are personally under the watch, discipline and government of that church.

4. These adult persons, are not therefore to be admitted to full communion, merely because they are and continue members, without such further qualifications, as the word of God requireth thereunto.

5. Church members who were admitted in minority, understanding the doctrine of faith, and publicly professing their assent thereto; not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the covenant before the church, wherein they give up themselves and their children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church, their children are to be baptised.

6. Such church members, who either by death, or some other extraordinary providence, have been inevitably hindered from public acting as aforesaid, yet have given the church cause in judgment of charity to look at them as so qualified, and such, as had they been called thereunto, would have so acted; their children are to be baptised.

7. The members of orthodox churches being sound in the faith, and not scandalous in life, and presenting due testimony thereof; these occasionally coming from one church to another, may have their children baptised in the church whither they come, by virtue of communion of churches: But if they remove their habitation, they ought orderly to covenant and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church where they settle their abode, and so their children to be baptised. It being the churches duty to receive such into communion, so far as they are regularly fit for the same.

The confirmation of these Propositions from the scripture followeth.

PROPOSITION FIRST.

They that according to scripture are members of the visible church, are the subjects of baptism.

The truth hereof may appear by the following evidences from the word of God.

1. When Christ saith, *Go ye therefore and teach*, or (as the Greek is) *disciple all nations, baptising them*, *Mat.* 28, 19, he expresseth the adequate subject of baptism, to be disciples, or discipled ones. But disciples there, is the same with members of the visible church.

For the visible church is Christ's school, wherein all the members stand related and subjected to him, as their master and teacher, and so are his scholars or disciples, and under his teaching, as verse 20. And it is that visible spiritual kingdom of Christ, which he there, from his kingly power, verse 18. sendeth them to set up and administer in verse 19. the subjects whereof are under his laws and government, verse 20. Which subjects (or members of that kingdom, i. e. of the visible church) are termed disciples, verse 19. Also in the acts of the Apostles (the story of their accomplishment of that commission) disciples are usually put for members of the visible church, *Acts* i. 15. In the midst of the disciples, who with others added to them, are called the church, *Acts*. ii. 47. The members whereof are again called disciples, *Acts* vi. 1, 2. *Acts* ix. 1—against the disciples of the Lord, i. e. against the church of God. 1 *Cor.* xv. 9. *Gal.* i, 13. *Acts* ix. 26. He assay-

ed to join himself to the disciples. The disciples at Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, *Acts* xiv. 21, 22, are called the church in each of these places, verse 23. So the church, verse 27, the disciples, verse 28. *Acts* xviii. 22, the church at Cæsaria, *Acts* xxi. 16, the disciples at Cæsaria, So *Acts* xviii. 23, with chap. xv. 41, and *Gal.* i. 2 *Acts* xviii. 27, and chap. xx. 1, with ver. 17, 28. From all which it appeareth, that disciples in *Mat.* xxviii. 19, and members of the visible church, are terms equivalent : and disciples being there by Christ himself made the subjects of baptism, it follows that the members of the visible church are the subjects of baptism.

2. Baptism is the seal of first entrance or admission into the visible church, as appeareth from those texts, 1 *Cor.* xii. 13, baptised into one body, i. e. our entrance into the body or church of Christ is sealed by baptism ; and *Rom.* vi. 3, 5. *Gal.* iii. 27, where it is shewed, that baptism is the sacrament of union or of ingrafting into Christ the head, and consequently into the church his body ; and from the Apostles constant practice in baptizing persons upon their first coming in, or first giving up themselves to the Lord and them. *Acts* viii. 12, and xvi. 15, 33, and xviii. 8, and in *Acts* ii. 41, 42, they were baptized at their first adding to the church, or admission into the Apostles fellowship, wherein they afterward continued.— And from its answering unto circumcision, which was a seal of initiation or admission into the church : Hence it belongs to all and only

those that are entered into, that are within, or that are members of the visible church.

3. They that according to scripture are members of the visible church, they are in covenant; for it is the covenant that constitutes the church, *Deut.* xxix. 12, 13. They must enter into covenant, that they might be established the people or church of God. Now the iniatory seal is affixed to the covenant, and appointed to run parallel therewith, *Gen.* xvii. 7, 9, 10, 11, so circumcision was: and hence called the covenant, *Gen.* xvii. 13, *Acts* vii. 8, and so baptism is, being in like manner annexed to the promise or covenant, *Act.* ii. 38, 39, and being the seal that answereth to circumcision, *Col.* ii. 11,12.

4. Christ doth sanctify and cleanse the church by the washing of water, i. e. by baptism, *Ephes.* v. 25, 26. Therefore the whole church, and so all the members thereof (who are also said in scripture to be sanctified in Christ Jesus, 1 *Cor.* i. 2,) are the subjects of baptism. And although it is the invisible church, unto the spiritual and eternal good whereof, this and all other ordinances lastly have respect, and which the place mentioned in *Ephes.* v. may in a special manner look unto, yet it is the visible church that is the next and immediate subject of the administration thereof. For the subject of visible external ordinances to be administered by men, must needs be visible. And so the Apostles baptized sundry persons, who were of the visible, but not of the invisible church, as Simon Magus, Ananias and Saphira, and others.

And these are visibly purchased and sanctified by the blood of Christ, the blood of the covenant, *Acts* xx. 28. *Heb.* x. 29. Therefore the visible seal of the covenant and of cleansing by Christ's blood, belongs to them.

5. The circumcision is often put for the whole Jewish church, or for the members of the visible church under the Old Testament.

Those within are expressed by the circumcised and those without by the uncircumcised *Rom.* xv. 8. and iii. 30. *Ephes.* ii. 11. *Judg.* xiv. 3, and xv. 18. 1 *Sam.* xiv. 6. and xvii. 26, 36. *Jer.* ix. 25, 26. Hence by proportion baptism (which is our Gospel circumcision, *Col.* ii. 11, 12.) belongs to the whole visible church under the New Testament. Actual and personal circumcision was indeed proper to the males of old, females being but inclusively and virtually circumcised, and so counted of the circumcision : but the Lord hath taken away that difference now, and appointed baptism to be personally applied to both sexes, *Acts* viii. 12. and xvi. 15. *Gal.* iii. 28. So that every particular member of the visible church is now a subject of baptism. We conclude therefore that baptism pertains to the whole visible church, and to all and every one therein, and to no other.

PROPOSITION SECOND.

The members of the visible church according to scripture, are confederate visible believers, in particular churches, and their infant seed,

i. e. children in minority, whose next parents, one or both are in covenant.

Sundry particulars are comprised in this Proposition, which we may consider and confirm distinctly.

Par. 1. Adult persons who are members of the visible church, are by rule confederate visible believers, *Acts* v. 14. Believers were added to the Lord. The believing Corinthians were members of the church there, *Acts* xviii. 8, with 1 *Cor.* i. 2, and xii. 27. The inscriptions of the Epistles written to churches, and calling the members thereof saints and faithful, shew the same thing. *Ephes.* i. 1. *Phil.* i. 1. *Col.* i. 2. And that confederation, i. e. covenanting explicit or implicit, (the latter preserveth the essence of confederation, the former is duty and most desirable) is necessary to make one a member of the visible church, appears, 1. Because the church is constituted by covenant: For there is between Christ and the church, the mutual engagement and relation of king and subjects, husband and spouse; this cannot be but by covenant, (internal if you speak of the invisible church, external of the visible) a church is a company that can say, God is our God, and we are his people; this is from the covenant between God and them. *Deut.* xxix. 12, 13. *Ezek.* xvi. 8, 2. The church of the Old Testament was the church of God, by covenant. *Gen.* xvii. *Deut.* xxix. and was reformed still by renewing of the covenant, 2 *Chron.* xv. 12. and xxiii. 16, and xxxiv. 31, 32, *Neh.* ix. 38. Now

the churches of the gentiles under the new testament, ſtand upon the same basis or root with the church of the old testament, and therefore are conſtituted by covenant as that was, *Rom.* xi. 17, 18. *Ephes.* ii. 11, 12, 19, and iii. 6. *Heb.* viii. 10. 3. Baptism enters us into the church sacramentally, i. e. by sealing the covenant. The covenant therefore is that which constitutes the church, and infers membership, and is the vow in baptism commonly spoken of.

Par. 2. The members of the visible church, are such as are confederate in particular churches. It may be minded that we are here speaking of members, so stated in the visible church, as that they are subjects to whom church ordinances may regularly be administered, and that according to ordinary dispensation. For were it granted, that the Apostles and Evangelists did sometimes baptize such as were not members of any particular church, yet their extraordinary office, large power and commission, renders them not imitable therein by ordinary officers. For then they might baptize in private without the presence of a christain assembly, as Philip did the Eunuch. But that in ordinary dispensation the members of the visible church according to scripture, are such as are members of some particular church, appears, 1. Because the visible believer that professedly covenants with God, doth therein give up himself to wait on God in all his ordinances, *Deut.* xxvi. 17, 18. *Mat.* xxviii. 19, 20. But all the ordinances of God are to be enjoyed on-

ly in a particular church. For how often do we find in the scripture, that they came together into one place (or met as a congregational particular church) for the observation and enjoyment of the ordinances. *Acts* ii. 1, 44, 46, and iv. 31, and xi. 26, and xx. 7. 1 *Cor.* v. 4, and xi. 18, 20, 33, and xiv. 23. 2. The Apostle in his Epistles writing to saints or believers, writes to them as in particular churches, 1 *Cor.* i. 2. *Ephes.* i. 1. *Phil.* i. 1. *Col.* i. 2. And when the story of the acts speaks of disciples other places shew that those are understood to be members of particular churches, *Acts.* xviii. 23, with *Gal.* i. 2. *Acts.* xxi. 16, with *chap.* xviii. 22. *Acts.* xi. 26, and 14, 22, 23, 27, 28. All which shews that the scripture acknowledgeth no settled orderly estate of visible believers in covenant with God, but only in particular churches. 3. The members of the visible church are disciples, as was above cleared; now disciples are under discipline, and liable to church censures, for they are stated subjects of Christ's laws and government, *Mat.* xxviii. 19, 20, but church-government and censures are extant now in ordinary dispensation, only in a particular church, *Mat.* xviii. 17. 1 *Cor.* v. 4.

PAR. 3. The infant-seed of confederate visible believers, are also members of the visible church. The truth of this is evident from the scriptures and reasons following.

ARG. 1. The covenant of Abraham, as to the substance thereof, viz. that whereby God

declares himself to be the God of the faithful and their seed, *Gen.* xvii. 7, continues under the gospel, as appears, 1. Because the believing inchurched Gentiles under the New Testament, do stand upon the same root of covenanting Abraham, which the Jews were broken of from *Rom.* xi. 16, 17, 18. 2. Because Abraham in regard of that covenant was made a father of many nations. *Gen.* xvii, 4, 5, even of Gentiles as well as Jews, under the New-Testament as well as Old, *Rom.* iv. 16, 17.—*Gal.* iii. 29, i. e. in Abraham, as a pattern and root, God (not only shewed how he justifies the believer, *Gal.* iii. 6, 9. *Rom.* 4, but also) conveyed that covenant to the faithful and their seed in all nations, *Luke* xix. 9. If a son of Abraham, then salvation, i. e. the covenant dispensation of salvation, is come to his house. 3. As that covenant was communicated to proselite Gentiles under the Old Testament, so its communication to the inchurched Gentiles under the New-Testament is clearly held forth in divers places, *Gal.* iii. 14. the blessing of Abraham comprised both the internal benefits of justification by faith, &c. which the Apostle is here treating of; and the external dispensation of grace in the visible church to the faithful and their seed, *Gen* xxviii. 4, but the whole blessing of Abraham, (and so the whole covenant) is come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, *Eph.* ii. 12, 19. They have been strangers, but now were no more strangers from the covenants of promise, i. e. from the covenant of

grace, which had been often renewed, especially with Abraham and the house of Israel, and had been in the external dispensation of it, their peculiar portion, so that the Ephesians, who were afar off, being now called and made nigh, *ver.* 13—17, they have the promise, or the covenant of promise to them, and to their children, according to *Acts* ii. 39, and so are partakers of that covenant of Abraham, that we are speaking of. *Eph.* iii. 6. The inchurched Gentiles are put into the same inheritance for substance (both as to invisible and visible benefits according to their respective conditions) are of the same body, and partakers of the same promise, with the Jews, the children of Abraham of old. The same may be gathered from *Gen.* ix. 27. *Mat.* viii. 11, and 21, 43. 4. Sundry scriptures which extend to gospel times, do confirm the same interest to the seed of the faithful, which is held forth in the covenant of Abraham, and consequently do confirm the continuance of that covenant, as *Exod.* xx. 6, therein the sanction of a moral and perpetual commandment, and that respecting ordinances, the portion of the church, God declareth himself to be a God of mercy, to them that love him, and to their seed after them in their generations: consonant to *Gen.* xvii. 7, compare here with *Psal.* cv. 8, 9, and *Deut.* vii. 9.

Deut. xxx. 6. The grace signified by circumcision is there promised to parents and children, importing the covenant to both, which circumcision sealed, *Gen.* xvii. and that is a gospel

promise, as the Apostle citing part of that context, as the voice of the gospel shews, *Rom.* x.—vi. viii. with *Deut.* xxx. 11.—xiv. and it reacheth to the Jews in the latter days, *ver.* 1—5.

Isa. lxv. 23. In the most glorious gospel-state of the church, *ver.* 17—19, the blessing of the Lord is the promised portion of the offspring or children, as well as of the faithful parents, so *Isai.* xliv. 3, 4. *Isai.* lix. 20, 21. *Ezek.* xxxvii. 25, 26. at the future calling of the Jews, which those texts have reference to (*Rom.* xi. 26. *Ezek.* xxxvii. 19—22, 23, 24,) their children shall be under the promise or covenant of special grace to be conveyed to them in the ordinances, *Isai.* lix. 21, and be subjects of David, i. e. Christ their King. *Ezek.* xxxvii. 25, and have a portion in his sanctuary, ver. 26, and this according to the tenor of the ancient covenant of Abraham, whereby God will be their God, (viz. both of parents and children) and they shall be his people, ver. 26, 27. Now although more abundant fruits of the covenant may be seen in those times, and the Jews then may have more abundant grace given to the body of them to continue in the covenant; yet the tenor and frame of the covenant itself, is one and the same, both to Jews and Gentiles under the New-Testament, *Gal.* iii. 28. *Col.* iii. 11. *Heb.* viii. 10. The house of Israel, i. e. the church of God both among Jews and Gentiles under the New-Testament, have that covenant made with them; the sum whereof is, I will be their God, and they shall be my people;

which is a renewing of that covenant of Abraham, in *Gen.* xvii. (as the same is very often over in those terms renewed in scripture, and is distinguished from the law, *Gal.* iii. 16, 17, *Heb.* viii. 9,) wherein is implied Gods being a God to the seed, as well as parents, and taking both to be his people, though it be not expressed; even as it is often plainly implied in that expression of the covenant in other places of scripture, *Deut.* xxix. 13. *Jer.* xxxi. 1, and 32, 38, 39, and xxiv. 7, and xxx. 22, 20. *Ezek.* xxxvii. 27, 25. Also the writing of the law in the heart, in *Heb.* viii. 10, is that heart-circumcision which *Deut.* xxx. 6, extends both to parents and seed. And the term house of Israel, doth according to scripture-use fitly express and take in (especially as to the external administration of the covenant) both parents and children, among both which are found that elect and saved number, that make up the visible Israel, compare *Jer.* xiii. 11, and ix. 26. *Isai.* v. 7. *Hos.* i. 6. *Ezek.* xxxix. 25. Neither may we exclude the least in age from the good of that promise, *Heb.* viii. 11, (they being sometimes pointed to by that phrase, from the least to the greatest, *Jer.* xliv. 12, with verse 7,) no more than the least in other respects; compare *Isai.* liv. 13.

In *Acts* ii. 39, at the passing of those Jews into New-Testament church-estate, the Lord is so far from repealing the covenant interest that was granted unto children in the former Testament, or from making the children there

losers by their parents faith, that he doth expressly renew the old grant, and tells them that the promise or covenant (for the promise and the covenant are terms that do mutually infer each other ; compare *Acts* iii. 25. *Gal.* iii. 16, 17, 18, 29. *Rom.* iv. 16. *Heb.* vi. 17,) is to them and to their children ; and the same is asserted to be the appointed portion of the far off Gentiles, when they should be called. By all which it appeareth, that the covenant of Abraham, *Gen.* xvii. 7, whereby God is the God of the faithful and their seed, continues under the gospel.

Now if the seed of the faithful be still in the covenant of Abraham, then they are members of the visible church. 1. Because that covenant of Abraham, *Gen.* xvii. 7. was properly church-covenant, or the covenant which God makes with his visible church, i. e. the covenant of grace considered in the external dispensation of it, and in the promises and privileges that belong to that dispensation : For many were taken into that covenant, that were never of the invsible church : And by that covenant, the family of Abraham, as also by the renewing thereof, the house of Israel, were afterward established the visible church of God, *Gen.* xvii. and *Deut.* xxix. 12, 13, and from that covenant men might be broken off, *Gen.* xvii. 14. *Rom.* xi. 17, 19, and to that covenant, circumcision, the badge of church-membership was annexed. Therefore the covenanters therein were and are church-members. 2. Because in that cov-

enant the seed are spoken of in terms describing or inferring church-membership, as well as their parents; for they have God for their God, and are his people, as well as the parents, *Gen.* xvii. 7, 8, with *Deut.* xxix. 11, 13. They have the covenant made with them, *Deut.* xxix. 14, 15, and the covenant is said to be between God and them (between me and thee, and between thy seed after thee: So the Hebrew runs) *Gen.* xvii. 7. They are also in that covenant appointed to be the subjects of the initiatory seal of the covenant, the seal of membership, *Gen.* xvii. 9, 10, 11. Therefore the seed are according to that covenant, members of the visible church, as well as their parents.

ARG. 2. Such seed or children are federally holy, 1 *Cor.* vii. 14. The word holy as applied to any sort of persons, is never in scripture used in a lower sense, than for federal or covenant-holiness, (the covenant holiness of the visible church) but very often in that sense, *Ezra* ix. 2. *Deut.* vii. 6, and xiv. 2, 21, and xxvi. 19, and xxviii. 9. *Exod.* xix. 6. *Dan.* viii. 24, and xii. 7. *Rom.* xi. 16. so that to say they are holy in this sense, viz. by covenant-relation, and separation to God in his church, is as much as to say, they are in the covenant of the visible church, or members of it.

ARG. 3. From *Mark* x. 14, 15, 16. *Mat.* xix. 14, childrens membership in the visible church, is either the next and immediate sense of those words of Christ, *Of such is the kingdom of heaven;* and so the kingdom of heaven, or of

God, is not rarely used in other scriptures to express the visible church, or church-estate, *Mat.* xxv. 1, and xxi. 43, and viii. 11, 12, or it evidently follows from any other sense that can rationally be given of the words. For those may not be denied a place and portion in the visible church, whom Christ affirms to have a portion in the kingdom, either of invisible grace, or of eternal glory: Nor do any in ordinary course pass into the kingdom of glory hereafter, but through the kingdom of grace in the visible church here. Add also, that Christ there graciously invites and calls little children to him, is greatly displeased with those that would hinder them, asserts them, notwithstanding their infancy, to be exemplary in receiving the kingdom of God, embraceth them in his arms, and blesseth them; all which shews Christ's dear affection to, and owning of the children of the church, as a part of his kingdom*; whom we therefore may not disown, lest we incur his displeasure, as the disciples did.

Arg. 4. Such seed or children are disciples according to *Mat.* xxviii. 19, as appears, 1. Because subjects of Christ's kingdom are equivalent with disciples there, as the frame of that text shews, verse 18, 19, 20, but such children are subjects of Christ's kingdom, or of the kingdom of heaven, *Mat.* xix. 14. In the discipling of all nations intended in *Mat.* xxviii. 19, the kingdom of God, which had been the portion of the Jews, was communicated to the Gentiles, according to *Mat.* xxi. 43. But in the

kingdom of God these children have an interest or portion. *Mark* x. 14. 2. The Apostles in accomplishing that commission, *Mat.* xxviii. 19, did disciple some children, viz. the children of discipled parents, *Acts.* ii. 39, and xv. 10.—They are there called and accounted disciples, whom the false teachers would have brought under the yoke of circumcision after the manner of Moses, verse 1, 5. But many of those were children, *Exod.* xii. 48. *Acts.* xxi. 21. Lydia and her household; the jailor and all his were discipled and baptized, *Acts.* xvi. 15, 31, 33. Paul at Corinth took in the children into the holy school of Christ, 1 *Cor.* vii. 14. 3. Such children belong to Christ, for he calls them to him as his, to receive his blessing, *Mark* x. 13, 16. They are to be received in his name, *Mark* ix. 37. *Luke* ix. 48. They have a part in the Lord, *Josh.* xxii. 24, 25. Therefore they are disciples; for to belong to Christ, is to be a disciple of Christ, *Mark* ix. 41, with *Mat.* x. 42. Now if they be disciples, then they are members of the visible church, as from the equivalency of those terms was before shewed.

Arg. 5. The whole current and harmony of scripture shews, that ever since there was a visible church on earth, the children thereof have by the Lord's appointment been a part of it.—So it was in the Old, and it is and shall be so in the New-Testament. Eve, the mother of all living, hath a promise made, *Gen.* iii. 15, not only of Christ the head seed, but through him also of a church seed, to proceed from her in a

continual lineal succession, which should continually be at visible enmity with, and stand at a distance, or be separated from, the seed of the serpent. Under that promise made to Eve and her seed, the children of Adam are born, and are a part of the church in Adam's family: Even Cain was so, *Gen.* iv. 13, till cast out of the presence of God therein, verse 14, being now manifestly one of the seed of the serpent, 1 *John* iii. 12, and so becoming the Father of a wicked unchurched race. But then God appointed unto Eve another, viz. Seth, in whom to continue the line of her church seed, *Gen.* iv. 25. How it did continue in his seed in their generation, *Gen.* v. sheweth. Hence the children of the church are called sons of God, (which is as much as members of the visible church) in contradiction to the daughters of men, *Gen.* vi. 2. If righteous Noah be taken into the Ark, (then the only preserving place of the church) his children are taken in with him, *Gen.* vii. 1, though one of them, viz. Ham, after proved degenerate and wicked; but till he so appears, he is continued in the church with his brethren; so *Gen.* ix. 25, 26, 27, as the race of Ham, or his son Canaan (parent and children) are cursed; so Shem (parent and children) is blessed, and continued in the place of blessing, the church: As Japhet also, or Japhetes posterity (still parent and children) shall in time be brought in. The holy line mentioned in *Gen.* xi. 10.—26, shews how the church continued in the seed of Shem, from him unto Abraham.

When that race grew degenerate, Josh. xxiv. 2, then God called Abraham out of his country, and from his kindred, and established his covenant with him, which still took in parents and children, *Gen.* xvii. 7, 9. So it did after in the house of Israel, *Deut.* xxix, 11, 12, 13, and when any eminent restoration or establishment is promised to the church, the children thereof are still taken in, as sharers in the same, *Psal.* cii. 16, 28, and lxix. 35, 36. *Jer.* xxxii. 38, 39. *Isa.* lxv. 18, 19, 23. Now when Christ comes to set up the Gospel administration of his church in the New Testament, under the term of the kingdom of heaven, *Mat.* iii. 2, and xi. 11, he is so far from taking away childrens portion and membership therein, that himself asserts it, *Mat.* xix. 14. The children of the Gentile, but now believing Corinthians, are holy, 1 *Cor.* vii. 14. The Apostle writing to the churches of Ephesus and Colosse, speaks to children, as a part thereof, *Eph.* vi. 1. *Col.* iii. 20. The inchurched Romans, and other Gentiles, stand on the root of covenanting Abraham, and in the olive or visible church, they and their children, till broken off (as the Jews were) by positive unbelief, or rejection of Christ, his truth or government, *Rom.* xi. 13, 16, 17—22. The children of the Jews, when they shall be called, shall be as aforetime in Church-estate, *Jer.* xxx. 20, with xxxi. 1. *Ezek* xxxvii. 25—28. From all which it appears, that the series, or whole frame and current of scripture-expressions, doth hold forth the continuance of childrens mem-

bership in the visible church, from the beginning to the end of the world.

PARTIC. 4. The seed or children who became members together with their parents, (i. e. by means of their parents covenanting) are children in minority; This appears, 1. Because such children are holy by their parents covenanting, who would else be unclean, 1 *Cor.* vii. 14, but they would not else necessarily be unclean, if they were adult; for then they might act for themselves, and so be holy by their personal covenanting: Neither on the other hand would they necessarily be holy, if adult, (as he asserts the children there to be) for they might continue Pagans. Therefore the Apostle intends only infants or children in minority. 2. It is a principle that carries evidence of light and reason with it, as to all transactions, civil and ecclesastical, that if a man be of age he should answer for himself, *John* ix. 21. They that are come to years of discretion, so as to have knowledge and understanding, fit to act in a matter of that nature, or to covenant by their own personal act, *Neh.* x. 28, 29. *Isa.* xliv. 5. 3. They that are regularly taken in with their parents, are reputed to be visible entertainers of the covenant, and avouchers of God to be their God, *Deut.* xxvi. 7, 18, with *Deut.* xxix. 11, 12. But if adult children should, without regard to their own personal act, be taken in with their parents, then some might be reputed entertainers, that are manifest rejecters of the covenant; for so an adult son or daughter of a godly parent may be.

PARTIC. 5. It is requisite to the membership of children, that the next parents one or both, be in covenant. For although after-generations have no small benefit by their pious ancestors, who derive federal holiness to their succeeding generations, in case they keep their standing in the covenant, and be not apostates from it, yet the piety of ancestors sufficeth not, unless the next parent continue in covenant, *Rom.* xi. 22. 1. Because if the next parent be cut or broken off, the following seed are broken off, also, *Exod.* xx. 5. *Rom.* xi. 17, 19, 20, as the Gentile believing parents and children were taken in; so the Jews parents and children were then broken off. 2. One of the parents must be a believer, or else the children are unclean, 1 *Cor.* vii. 14. 3. If children may be accounted members and baptized, though the next parents be not in covenant, then the church should be bound to baptize those, whom she can have no power over, nor hope concerning, to see them brought up in the true christian religion, and under the ordinances: For the next parents being wicked, and not in covenant, may carry away, and bring up their children to serve other gods. 4. If we stop not at the next parents, but grant that ancesters may, notwithstanding the apostacy of the next parents, convey membership unto children, then we should want a ground where to stop, and then all the children on earth should have a right to membership and baptism.

PROPOSITION THIRD.

3. The infant-seed of confederate visible believers, are members of the same church with their parents, and when grown up, are personally under the watch, discipline and government of that church.

1. That they are members of the same church with their parents, appears, 1. Because so were Isaac and Ishmael of Abrahams family church, and the children of the Jews and proselytes of Israels national church; and there is the same reason for children now to be of the same congregational church with their parents. Christ's care for children and the scope of the covenant, as to obligation unto order and government, is as great now, as then. 2. Either they are members of the same church with their parents, or of some other church, or non-members; but neither of the latter; therefore the former.—That they are not non-members was before proved in proposition 2, particular 3, and if not members of the same church with their parents, then of no other. For if there be not reason sufficient to state them members of that church where their parents have covenanted for them, and where ordinarily they are baptized and do inhabit, then much less is there reason to make them members of any other, and so they will be members of no particular church at all; and it was before shewed, that there is no ordinary and orderly standing estate of church-members, but in some particular church. 3. The same covenant-act is accounted the act of parent and

child: but the parents covenanting rendered himself a member of this particular church; therefore so it renders the child also. How can children come in with and by their parents, and yet come into a church, wherein and whereof their parents are not, so as that they should be of one church, and their parents of another: 4. Children are in an orderly and regular state: for they are in that state, wherein the order of God's covenant, and his institution therein, hath placed them; they being members by virtue of the covenant of God. To say their standing is disorderly, would be to impute disorder to the order of God's covenant, or irregularity to the rule. Now all will grant it to be most orderly and regular, that every christian be a member in some particular church, and in that particular church where his regular habitation is; which to children usually is, where their parents are: If the rule call them to remove, then their membership ought orderly to be translated to the church, whither they remove. Again, order requires that the child, and the power of government over the child, should go together.—It would bring shame and confusion for the child to be from under government, *Prov.* xxix. 15, and parental and ecclesiastical government concurring, do mutually help and strengthen each other. Hence the parent and child must be members of the same church; unless the child be by some special providence so removed, as that some other person hath the power over him.

2. That when these children are grown up, they are personally under the watch, discipline and government of that church, is manifest: for, 1. Children were under Patriarchal and Mosaical displine of old, *Gen.* xviii. 19, and xxi. 9, 10, 12. *Gal.* v. 3, and therefore under congregational discipline now. 2. They are within the church, or members thereof, (as hath been, and after will be further proved) and therefore subject to church judicature, 1 *Cor.* v. 12. 3. They are disciples, and therefore under discipline in Christ's school, *Mat.* xxviii. 19, 20. 4. They are in church-covenant, therefore subject to church-power, *Gen.* xvii. 7, with chap. xviii. 19. 5. They are subjects of the kingdom of Christ, and therefore under the laws and government of his kingdom, *Ezek.* xxxvii. 25, 26. 6. Baptism leaves the baptized (of which number these children are) in a state of subjection to the authoritive teaching of Christ's ministers, and to the observation of all his commandments, *Mat.* xxviii. 19, 20, and therefore in a state of subjection unto discipline. 7. Elders are charged to take heed unto, and to feed (i. e. both to teach and rule, compare *Ezek.* xxxiv. 3, 4.) All the flock or church, over which the holy Ghost hath made them overseers, *Acts.* xx. 28. That children are a part of the flock, was before proved: and so Paul accounts them, writing to the same flock or church of Ephesus, *Eph.* vi. 1, 8. Otherwise irreligion and apostacy would inevitably break into churches, and no church-way left by Christ to prevent or heal the same;

which would also bring many church-members under that dreadful judgment of being left alone in their wickedness, *Hos.* iv. 16, 17.

PROPOSITION FOURTH.

These adult persons, are not therefore to be admitted to full communion, merely because they are and continue members, without such further qualifications, as the word of God requireth thereunto.

The truth hereof is plain, 1. From 1 *Cor.* xi. 28, 29, where it is required, that such as come to the Lord's supper, be able to examine themselves, and to discern the Lord's body; else they will eat and drink unworthily, and eat and drink damnation, or judgment to themselves, when they partake of this ordinance.—But meer membership is separable from such ability to examine ones self, and discern the Lord's body: as in the children of the covenant, that grow up to years is too often seen. 2. In the Old Testament, though men did continue members of the church, yet for ceremonial uncleanness they were to be kept from full communion in the holy things, *Lev.* vii. 20, 21. *Numb.* ix. 6, 7, and xix. 13, 20, yea and the Priests and Porters in the Old Testament had special charge committed to them, that men should not partake in all the holy things, unless duly qualified for the same, notwithstanding their membership, 2. *Chron.* xxiii. 19.—*Ezek.* xxii. 26, and xliv. 7, 8, 9, 23, and therefore much more in these times, where moral

fitness and spiritual qualifications are wanting, membership alone is not sufficient for full communion. More was required to adult persons eating the passover, then meer membership: therefore so there is now to the Lord's supper. For they were to eat to the Lord, *Exodus* xii. 14, which is expounded in 2 *Chron.* xxx. where, keeping the passover to the Lord, verse 5 imports and requires exercising repentance, verse 6, 7, their actual giving up themselves to the Lord, verse 8, heart preparation for it, verse 19, and holy rejoicing before the Lord, verse 21, 25. See the like in *Ezra* vi. 21, 22. 3. Though all members of the church are subjects of baptism, they and their children, yet all members may not partake of the Lord's supper, as is further manifest from the different nature of baptism and the Lord's supper. Baptism firstly and properly seals covenant-holiness, as circumcision did, *Gen.* xvii. church-membership, *Rom.* xv. 8, planting into Christ, *Rom.* vi. and so members, as such, are the subjects of baptism, *Mat.* xxviii. 19. But the Lord's supper is the sacrament of growth in Christ, and of special communion with him, 1 *Cor.* x. 16, which supposeth a special renewing and exercise of faith and repentance in those that partake of that ordinance. Now if persons, even when adult, may be and continue members, and yet be debarred from the Lord's supper, until meet qualifications for the same do appear in them, then may they also (until like qualifications) be debarred from that power of voting

in the church, which pertains to males in full communion. It seems not rational, that those who are not themselves fit for all ordinances, should have such an influence referring to all ordinances, as voting in election of officers, admission and censures of members doth import. For how can they who are not able to examine and judge for themselves, be thought able and fit to discern and judge in the weighty affairs of the house of God? 1 *Cor.* xi. 28, 31, with 1 *Cor.* v. 12.

PROPOSITION FIFTH.

Church-members who were admitted in minority, understanding the doctrine of faith, and publickly professing their assent thereto; not scandalous in life, and solemnly owning the covenant before the church, wherein they give up themselves and their children to the Lord, and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church, their children are to be baptized.

This is evident from the arguments following.

These children are partakers of that which is the main ground of baptizing any children whatsoever, and neither the parents nor the children do put in any barr to hinder it.

1. That they partake of that which is the main ground of baptizing any, is clear: Because interest in the covenant is the main ground of title to baptism, and this these children have. 1. Interest in the covenant, is the main ground of title to baptism; for so in the Old Testa-

ment, this was the ground of title to circumcision, *Gen.* xvii. 7, 9, 10, 11, to which baptism now answers, *Col.* ii. 11, 12, and in *Acts* ii. 38, 39, they are on this ground exhorted to be baptized, because the promise or covenant was to them and to their children. That a member or one in covenant, as such is the subject of baptism, was further cleared before in proposition 1. 2. That these children have interest in the covenant, appears; because if the parent be in covenant, the child is also: For the covenant is to parents and their seed in their generations, *Gen.* xvii. 7, 9. The promise is to you and to your children, *Acts* ii. 39. If the parent stand in the church, so doth the child among the Gentiles now, as well as among the Jews of old, *Rom.* xi. 16, 20, 21, 22. It is unheard of in scripture, that the progress of the covenant stops at the infant-child. But the parents in question are in covenant, as appears, 1. Because they were once in covenant, and never since discovenanted. If they had not once been in covenant, they had not warrantably been baptized; and they are so still, except in some way of God they have been discovenanted, cast out, or cut off from their covenant relation, which these have not been; neither are persons once in covenant, broken off from it according to scripture, save for notorious sin, and incorrigibleness therein, *Rom.* xi. 20, which is not the case of these parents. 2. Because the tenor of the covenant is to the faithful and their seed after them in their generations, *Gen.* xvii. 7,

even to a thousand generations, i. e. conditionally, provided that the parents successively do continue to be keepers of the covenant, *Exodus* xx. 6, *Deut.* vii. 9, 11. *Psal.* cv. 8, which the parents in question are, because they are not (in scripture account in this case) forsakers or rejecters of the God and covenant of their fathers: See *Deut.* xxix. 25, 26. 2 *Kings* xvii. 15—20. 2 *Chron.* vii. 22. *Deut.* vii. 10.

2. That these parents in question do not put in any barr to hinder their children from baptism, is plain from the words of the proposition, wherein they are described to be such as understand the doctrine of faith, and publickly profess their assent thereto: Therefore they put not in any barr of gross ignorance, Atheism, Heresy or Infidelity: Also they are not scandalous in life, but solemnly own the covenant before the church; therefore they put not in any barr of profaneness, or wickedness, or apostacy from the covenant, whereinto they entered in minority. That the infant-children in question do themselves put in any barr, none will imagine.

The children of the parents in question, are either children of the covenant, or strangers from the covenant, *Ephes.* ii. 12, either holy or unclean, 1 *Cor.* vii. 14, either within the church or without, 1 *Cor.* v. 12, either such as have God for their God, or without God in the world, *Ephes.* ii. 12. But he that considers the proposition, will not affirm the latter concern-

ing these children: and the former being granted, infers their right to baptism.

To deny the proposition would be, 1. To straiten the grace of Christ in the gospel-dispensation, and to make the church in New-Testament times in a worse case, relating to their children successively, then were the Jews of old. 2. To render the children of the Jews when they shall be called, in a worse condition then under the legal administration, contrary to *Jer.* xxx. 20. *Ezek.* xxxvii. 25, 26. 3. To deny the application of the initiatory seal to such as regularly stand in the church and covenant, to whom the Mosaical dispensation, nay the first institution in the covenant of Abraham, appointed it to be applied, *Gen.* xvii. 9, 10. *John* vii. 22, 23. 4. To break Gods covenant, by denying the initiatory seal to those that are in covenant, *Gen.* xvii. 9, 10, 14.

Confederate visible believers, though but in the lowest degree such, are to have their children baptized; witness the practice of John Baptist and the Apostles, who baptized persons upon their first beginning of their christianity. But the parents in question are confederate visible believers, at least in some degree: For, 1. Charity may observe in them sundry positive arguments for it; witness the terms of the propsition, and nothing evident against it. 2. Children of the godly qualified, but as the persons in the proposition, are said to be faithful, *Tit.* i. 6. 3. Children of the covenant (as the parents in question are) have frequently the beginning

of grace wrought in them in younger years, as scripture and experience shews: Instance Joseph, Samuel, David, Solomon, Abijah, Josiah, Daniel, John Baptist and Timothy. Hence this sort of persons showing nothing to the contrary, are in charity, or to Ecclesiastical reputation, visible believers. 4. They that are regularly in the church, (as the parents in question be) are visible saints, in the account of scripture; (which is the account of truth) for the church is in scripture account, a company of saints, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 33, and i. 2—5. Being in covenant and baptized, they have faith and repentance indefinitely given to them in the promise, and sealed up in baptism, *Deut.* xxx. 6, which continues valid, and so a valid testimony for them, while they do not reject it. Yet it doth not necessarily follow, that these persons are immediately fit for the Lord's supper; because though they are in a latitude of expression to be accounted visible believers, or in *numero fidelium*, as even infants in covenant are, yet they may want that ability to examine themselves, and that special exercise of faith, which is requisite to that ordinance; as was said upon proposition 4th.

The denial of baptism to the children in question, hath a dangerous tendency to irreligion and apostacy; because it denies them, and so the children of the church successively, to have any part in the Lord; which is the way to make them cease from fearing the Lord, *Josh.* xxii. 24, 25, 27. For if they have a part in the

Lord, i. e. a portion in Israel, and so in the Lord the God of Israel, then they are in the church, or members of it, and so to be baptized, according to proposition 1. The owning of the children of those that successively continue in covenant to be a part of the church, is so far from being destructive to the purity and prosperity of the church, and of religion therein, (as some conceive) that this imputation belongs to the contrary tenet. To seek to be more pure than the rule will ever end in impurity in the issue. God hath so framed his covenant, and consequently the constitution of his church thereby, as to design a continuation and propagation of his kingdom therein, from one generation to another. Hence the covenant runs to us and to our seed after us in their generations. To keep in the line, and under the influence and efficacy of this covenant of God, is the true way to the churches glory: To cut it off and disavow it, cuts off the prosperity of Sion, and hinders it from being (as in the most glorious times it shall be) an eternal excellency, and the joy of many generations. This progress of the covenant establisheth the church, *Deut.* xxix. 13. *Jer.* xxx. 20. The contrary therefore doth disestablish it. This obligeth and advantageth to the conveyance of religion, down to after generations; the care whereof is strictly commanded, and highly approved by the Lord, *Psal.* lxxviii. 4, 5, 6, 7. *Gen.* xviii. 19. This continues a nursery still in Christs orchard or vineyard, *Isai.* v. 1, 7, the contrary

neglects that, and so lets the whole run to ruin. Surely God was an holy God, and loved the purity and glory of the church in the Old Testament: but then he went in this way of a successive progress of the covenant to that end, *Jer.* xiii. 11. If some did then, or do now decline to unbelief and apostacy, that doth not make the faith of God in his covenant of none effect, or the advantage of interest therein inconsiderable: Yea, the more holy, reforming and glorious that the times are or shall be, the more eminently is a successive continuation and propagation of the church therein designed, promised and intended. *Isa.* lx. 15, and lix. 21. *Ezek.* xxxvii. 25—28. *Psal.* cii. 16—28. *Jer.* xxxii. 39.

The parents in question are personal, immediate, and yet continuing members of the church.

1. That they are personal members, or members in their own persons, appears, 1. Because they are personally holy, 1 *Cor.* vii. 14, not parents only, but your children are holy. 2. They are personally baptized, or have had baptism, the seal of membership, applied to their own persons: which being regularly done, is a divine testimony that they are in their own persons members of the church. 3. They are personally under discipline, and liable to church-censures in their own persons; see proposition 3. 4. They are pesonally (by means of the covenant) in a visible state of salvation. To say they are not members in their own persons, but in their parents, would be as if one should say,

they are saved in their parents, and not in their own persons. 5. When they commit iniquity, they personally break the covenant; therefore are personally in it, *Jer.* xi. 2, 10. *Ezek.* xvi.

2. By the like reasons it appears, that children are immediate members, as to the essence of membership, (i. e. that they themselves in their own persons, are the immediate subjects of this adjunct of church-membership) though they come to it by means of their parents covenanting. For as touching that distinction of mediate and immediate, as applied to membership, (which some urge) we are to distinguish, 1. Between the efficient and the essence of membership. 2. Between the instrumental efficient or means thereof, which is the parents profession and covenanting; and the principal efficient, which is divine institution. They may be said to be mediate (or rather mediately) members, as they become members by means of their parents covenanting, as an instrumental cause thereof: but that doth nothing vary or diminish the essence of their membership. For divine institution giveth or granteth a real and personal membership unto them, as well as unto their parents, and maketh the parent a publick person, and so his act theirs to that end. Hence the essence of membership, i. e. covenant-interest, or a place and portion within the visible church, is really, properly, personally and immediately the portion of the child by divine gift and grant, *Josh.* xxii. 25, 27, their children have a part in the Lord, as well as

themselves. A part in the Lord there, and church-membership (or membership in Israel) are terms equivalent. Now the children there, and a part in the Lord, are subject and adjunct, which nothing comes between, so as to sever the adjunct from the subject; therefore they are immediate subjects of that adjunct, or immediate members. Again, their visible ingrafting into Christ the head, and so into the church his body, is sealed in their baptism: But in ingrafting, nothing comes between the graft and the stock: Their union is immediate; hence they are immediately inserted into the visible church, or immediate members thereof. The little children in *Deut.* xxix. 11, were personally and immediately a part of the people of God, or members of the church of Israel, as well as the parents. To be in covenant, or to be a covenantee, is the *formalis ratio* of a church-member. If one come to be in covenant one way, and another in another, but both are in covenant or covenantees, (i. e. parties with whom the covenant is made, and whom God takes into covenant) as the children here are, *Gen* xvii. 7, 8, then both are in their own persons the immediate subjects of the *formalis ratio* of membership, and so immediate members.—To act in covenanting, is but the instrumental means of membership, and yet children are not without this neither: For the act of the parent (their public person) is accounted theirs, and they are said to enter into covenant, *Deut.* xxix. 11, 12. So that what is it that children want

unto an actual, compleat, proper, absolute and immediate membership? (so far as these terms may with any propriety or pertinency be applied to the matter in hand) is it covenant-interst, which is the *formalis ratio* of membership? No, they are in covenant: Is it divine grant and institution, which is the principal efficient? No, he hath clearly declared himself, that he grants unto the children of his people a portion in his church, and appoints them to be members thereof. Is it an act of covenanting, which is the instrumental means? No, they have this also reputatively by divine appointment, making the parent, a public person, and accounting them to covenant in his covenanting: A different manner and means of conveying the covenant to us, or of making us members, doth not make a different sort of membership. We now are as truly, personally and immediately members of the body of fallen mankind, and by nature heirs of the condemnation pertaining thereto, as Adam was, though he came to be so by his own personal act, and we by the act of our public person. If a prince give such lands to a man and his heirs successively, while they continue loyal, the following heir is a true and immediate owner of that land, and may be personally disinhereted, if disloyal, as well as his father before him. A member is one that is according to rule, (or according to divine institution) within the visible church.—Thus the child is properly, and personally or immediately. Paul casts all men into two sorts

those *within*, and those *without*, i. e. members and non-members, 1 *Cor.* v. 12. It seems he knew of no such distinction of mediate and immediate, as puts a medium between these two. *Object.* If children be compleat and immediate members as their parents are, then they shall immediately have all church privileges, as their parents have, without any further act or qualification. *Ans.* It followeth not, all privileges that belong to members, as such, do belong to the children as well as the parents: but all church-privileges do not so. A member as such, (or all members) may not partake of all privileges; but they are to make progress both in memberly duties and privileges, as their age, capacity and qualifications do fit them for the same.

3. That their membership still continues in adult age, and ceaseth not with their infancy, appears, 1. Because in scripture persons are broken off, only for notorious sin, or incorrigible impenitency and unbelief, not for growing up to adult age, *Rom.* xi. 20. 2. The Jew-children circumcised did not cease to be members by growing up, but continued in the church, and were by virtue of their membership received in infancy, bound unto various duties, and in special unto those solemn personal professions that pertained to adult members, not as then entering into a new membership, but as making a progress in memberly duties, *Deut.* xxvi. 2—10, and xvi. 16, 17, with *Gal.* v. 3, 3. Those relations of born-servants and subjects,

which the scripture makes use of to set forth the state of children in the church by, *Lev.* xxv. 41, 42. *Ezek.* xxxvii. 25, do not (as all men know) cease with infancy, but continue in adult age. Whence also it follows, that one special end of membership received in infancy, is to leave persons under engagement to service and subjection to Christ in his church, when grown up, when they are fittest for it, and have most need of it. 4. There is no ordinary way of cessation of membership but by death, dismission, excommunicating, or dissolution of the society; none of which is the case of the persons in question. 5. Either they are when adult, members or non-members: If non-members, then a person admitted a member, and sealed by baptism, not cast out, nor deserving so to be, may (the church whereof he was, still remaining) become a non-member, and out of the church, and of the unclean world; which the scripture acknowledgeth not. Now if the parent stand member of the church, the child is a member also: For now the root is holy, therefore so are the branches, *Rom.* xi. 16. 1 *Cor.* vii. 14. The parent is in covenant therefore so is the child, *Gen.* xvii. 7, and if the child be a member of the visible church, then he is a subject of baptism, according to proposition 1.

PROPOSITION SIXTH.

Such church-members who either by death or some other extraordinary providence, have

been inevitably hindered from public acting as aforesaid, yet have given the church cause in judgment of charity, to look at them as so qualified, and such, as had they been called thereunto, would have so acted; their children are to be baptized.

This is manifest, 1. Because the main foundation of the right of the child to privilege remains viz. God's institution, and the force of his covenant carrying it to the generations of such as continue keepers of the covenant, i. e. not visibly breakers of it. By virtue of which institution and covenant, the children in question are members, and their membership being distinct from the parents membership, ceaseth not, but continues notwithstanding the parents decease or necessary absence: and if members, then subjects of baptism. 2. Because the parents not doing what is required in the fifth proposition, is through want of opportunity; which is not to be imputed as their guilt, so as to be a barr to the child's privilege. 3. God reckoneth that as done in his service, to which there was a manifest desire and endeavour, albeit the acting of it were hindred; as in David to build the Temple, 1 *Kings* viii. 18, 19, in Abraham to sacrifice his son, *Heb.* xi. 17, according to that in 2 *Cor.* viii. 12. Where there is a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not: which is true of this church-duty, as well as of that of alms. It is an usual phrase with the ancients to style such and such Martyrs *in voto*,

and baptized *in volo*, because there was no want of desire that way, though their desire was not actually accomplished. 4. The terms of the proposition import that in charity, that is here done interpretatively, which is mentioned to be done in the fifth proposition expressly.

PROPOSITION SEVENTH.

The members of orthodox churches, being sound in the faith, and not scandalous in life, and presenting due testimony thereof; these occasionally coming from one church to another, may have their children baptized in the church whither they come, by virtue of communion of churches: But if they remove their habitation, they ought orderly to covenant and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church where they settle their abode, and so their children to be baptized. It being the churches duty to receive such unto communion, so far as they are regularly fit for the same.

1. Such members of other churches as are here described, occasionally coming from one church to another, their children are to be baptized in the church whither they come, by virtue of communion of churches: 1. Because he that is regularly a member of a true particular church, is a subject of baptism, according to proposition 1st and 2d. But the children of the parents here described are such according to proposition 5th and 6th. therefore they are meet and lawful subjects of baptism, or have right to

be baptized. And communion of churches infers such acts as this, viz. to baptize a fit subject of baptism, though a member of another church, when the same is orderly desired. (See Platform of discipline, chap. xv. sect. 4.) For look as every church hath a double consideration, viz. 1. Of its own constitution and communion within itself. 2. Of that communion which it holds and ought to maintain with other churches: So the officer (the pastor or teacher) thereof, is there set, 1. To administer to this church constantly; 2. To do acts of communion occasionally, (viz. such as belong to his office, as baptizing doth) respecting the members of other churches, with whom this church holds, or ought to hold communion. 2. To refuse communion with a true church in lawful and pious actions, is unlawful, and justly accounted schismatical. For if the church be true, Christ holdeth some communion with it; therefore so must we: but if we will not have communion with it in those acts that are good and pious, then in none at all. Total separation from a true church is unlawful: But to deny communion in good actions, is to make a total separation. Now to baptize a fit subject, as is the child in question, is a lawful and pious action, and therefore by virtue of communion of churches, in the case mentioned to be attended. And if baptism lawfully administered, may and ought to be received by us for our children in another true church, where providence so casts us, as that we cannot have it in our own, (as

doubtless it may and ought to be) then also we may and ought in like case to dispense baptism, when desired, to a meet and lawful subject, being a member of another church. To deny or refuse either of these, would be an unjustifiable refusing of communion of churches, and tending to sinful separation.

2. Such as remove their habitation, ought orderly to covenant and subject themselves to the government of Christ in the church, where they settle their abode, and so their children to be baptized. 1. Because the regularly baptized are disciples, and under the discipline and government of Christ: But they that are absolutely removed from the church whereof they were, so as to be uncapable of being under discipline there, shall be under it no where, if not in the church where they inhabit. They that would have church-privileges, ought to be under church-power: but these will be under no church-power, but as lambs in a large place, if not under it there where their settled abode is. 2. Every christian ought to covenant for himself and his children, or professedly to give up himself and his to the Lord, and that in the way of his ordinances, *Deut.* xxvi. 17, and xii. 5, and explicit covenanting is a duty, especially where we are called to it, and have opportunity for it: Nor can they well be said to covenant implicitly, that do explicitly refuse a professed covenanting, when called thereunto.—And especially this covenanting is a duty, when we would partake of such a church-privilege, as

baptism for our children is. But the parents in question will now be professed covenanters no where, if not in the church where their fixed habitation is. Therefore they ought orderly to covenant there, and so their children to be baptized. 3. To refuse covenanting and subjection to Christ's government in the church where they live, being so removed, as to be utterly uncapable of it elsewhere, would be a walking disorderly, and would too much savour of profaneness and separation: and hence to administer baptism to the children of such as stand in that way, would be to administer Christs ordinances to such as are in a way of sin and disorder, which ought not to be, 2 *Thess.* iii. 6. 1 *Chron.* xv. 13, and would be contrary to that rule, 1 *Cor.* xiv. 40. Let all things be done decently and in order.

Question II. WHETHER according to the word of God there ought to be a Consociation of churches, and what should be the manner of it?

Answer. The answer may be briefly given in the propositions following.

1. Every church, or particular congregation of visible saints in gospel-order, being furnished with a Presbytery, at least with a teaching elder, and walking together in truth and peace, hath received from the Lord Jesus full power and authority ecclesiastical within itself, regu-

larly to administer all the ordinances of Christ, and is not under any other ecclesiastical jurisdiction whatsoever. For to such a church Christ hath given the keys of the kingdom of heaven, that what they bind or loose on earth, shall be bound or loosed in heaven, *Mat.* xvi. 19, and xviii. 17, 18. Elders are ordained in every church, *Acts* xiv. 23. *Tit.* i. 5, and are therein authorized officially to administer in the word, prayer, sacraments and censures, *Mat.* xxviii. 19, 20. *Acts* vi. 4. 1 *Cor.* iv. 1, and v. 4, 12. *Acts* xx. 28. 1 *Tim.* v. 17, and iii. 5. The reproving of the church of Corinth, and of the Asian churches severally, imports they had power, each of them within themselves, to reform the abuses that were amongst them, 1 *Cor.* v. *Rev.* ii. xiv. xx. Hence it follows, that consociation of churches is not to hinder the exercise of this power, but by counsel from the word of God to direct and strengthen the same upon all just occasions.

2. The churches of Christ do stand in a sisterly relation each to other, *Cant.* viii. 8, being united in the same faith and order, *Eph.* iv. 5. *Col.* ii. 5, to walk by the same rule, *Phil.* iii. 16, in the exercise of the same ordinances for the same ends, *Eph.* iv. 11, 12, 13. 1 *Cor.* xvi. 1, under one and the same political head, the Lord Jesus Christ, *Eph.* i. 22, 23, and iv. 5.—*Rev.* ii. 1. Which union infers a communion suitable thereunto.

3. Communion of churches is the faithful improvement of the gifts of Christ bestowed

upon them for his service and glory, and their mutual good and edification, according to capacity and opportunity 1 *Pet.* iv. 10, 11. 1 *Cor.* xii. 4, 7, and x. 24. 1 *Cor.* iii. 21, 22. *Cant.* viii. 9. *Rom.* i. 15. *Gal.* vi. 10.

4. Acts of communion of churches are such as these:

1. Hearty care and prayer one for another, 2 *Cor.* xi. 28. *Cant.* viii. 8. *Rom.* i. 9. *Col.* i. 9. *Eph.* vi. 18.

2. To afford relief, by communication of their gifts in temporal or spiritual necessities, *Rom.* xv. 26, 27. *Acts* xi. 22, 29. 2 *Cor.* viii. 1, 4, 14.

3. To maintain unity and peace, by giving account one to another of their publick actions, when it is ordely desired, *Acts* xi. 2, 3, 4, 18. *Josh.* xxii. 13, 21, 30. 1 *Cor.* x. 32, and to strengthen one another in their regular administrations; as in special by a concurrent testimony against persons justly censured, *Acts* xv. 41, and xvi. 4, 5. 2 *Tim.* iv. 15. 2 *Thess.* iii. 14.

4. To seek and accept help from, and give help unto each other:

1. In case of divisions and contentions, whereby the peace of any church is disturbed, *Acts* xv. 2.

2. In matters of more than ordinary importance, *Prov.* xxiv. 6, and xv. 22, as ordination, translation, and deposition of elders, and such like, 1 *Tim.* v. 22.

3. In doubtful and difficult questions and controversies, doctrinal or practical, that may arise, *Acts* xv. 2, 6.

4. For the rectifying of mal-administrations, and healing of errors and scandals, that are unhealed among themselves, 3 *John* ver 9, 10.— 2 *Cor.* ii. 6, 11. 1 *Cor.* xv. *Rev.* ii. 14, 15, 16. 2 *Cor.* xii. 20, 21, and xiii. 2. Churches now have need of help in like cases, as well as churches then. Christ's care is still for whole churches, as well as for particular persons; and Apostles being now ceased there remains the duty of brotherly-love, and mutual care and helpfulness incumbent upon churches, especially elders for that end.

5. In love and faithfulness to take notice of the troubles and difficulties, errors and scandals of another church, and to administer help (when the case manifestly calls for it) though they should so neglect their own good and duty, as not to seek it, *Exod.* xxiii. 4, 5. *Prov.* xxiv. 11, 12.

6. To admonish one another when there is need and cause for it; and after due means with patience used, to withdraw from a church or peccant party therein, obstinately persisting in error or scandal; as in the Platform of discipline (chap. xv. sect. ii. particular 3,) is more at large declared, *Gal.* ii. 11, 14. 2 *Thess.* iii. 6. *Rom.* xvi. 17.

5. Consociation of churches, is their mutual and solemn agreement to exercise communion in such acts, as aforesaid, amongst themselves, with special reference to those churches, which by providence are planted in a convenient vicinity, though with liberty reserved without offence, to make use of others, as the nature of

the case, or the advantage of opportunity may lead thereunto.

6. The churches of Christ in this country having so good opportunity for it, it is meet to be commended to them, as their duty thus to consociate. For 1. Communion of churches being commanded, and consociation being but an agreement to practice it, this must needs be a duty also, *Psal.* cxix. cvi. *Nehem.* x. 28, 29.— 2. *Paul* an Apostle sought with much labour the conference, concurrence and right hand of fellowship of other Apostles; and ordinary elders and churches have not less need each of other, to prevent their running in vain, *Gal.* ii. 2, 6, 9. 3. Those general scripture rules touching the need and use of counsel and help in weighty cases, concern all societies and polities, ecclesiastical as well as civil, *Prov.* xi. 14, and xv. 22, and xx. 18, and xxiv. 6. *Eccl.* iv. 9, 10, 12. 4. The pattern in *Acts* xv. holds forth a warrant for councils, which may be greater or lesser, as the matter shall require. 5. Concurrence and communion of churches in gospel times, is not obscurely held forth in *Isai.* xix. 23, 24, 25. *Zeph.* iii. 9. 1 *Cor.* xi. 16, and xiv. 32, 36. 6. There hath constantly been in these churches a profession of communion, in giving the right hand of fellowship at the gathering of churches, and ordination of elders: Which importeth a consociation, and obligeth to the practice thereof. Without which we should also want an expedient and sufficient cure for emergent church-difficulties and differ-

ences : with the want whereof our way is charged, but unjustly, if this part of the doctrine thereof were duly practised.

7. The manner of the churches agreement herein, or entering into this consociation, may be by each church's open consenting unto the things here declared in answer to this second question, as also to what is said thereabout in chap. xv. and xvi. of the Platform of discipline, with reference to other churches in this colony and country, as in proposition 5th, is before expressed.

8. The manner of exercising and practising that communion, which this consent or agreement specially tendeth unto, may be, by making use occasionally of elders or able brethren of other churches, or by the more solemn meetings of both elders and messengers in lesser or greater councils, as the matter shall require.

At a General Court held at Boston *in* New-England, *the eighth of October*, 1662.

THE Court having read over this result of the Synod, judge meet to commend the same unto the consideration of all the churches and people of this jurisdiction ; and for that end do order the printing thereof.

By the Court, EDWARD RAWSON, *Sec'ry.*

A

CONFESSION

OF

FAITH,

Owned and consented unto by the

ELDERS AND MESSENGERS

OF THE

CHURCHES

Assembled at BOSTON in *New-England*, May 12, 1680.

Being the second session of that

SYNOD.

Eph. iv. 5.—— *One Faith.*
Col. ii. 5 *...ing and beholding your Order, and the stedfastness of your Faith in Christ.*

At a General Court held at *Boston*, May 19, 1680.

THIS Court having taken into serious consideration, the request that hath been presented by several of the Reverend Elders in the name of the late Synod, do approve thereof, and accordingly order the confession of Faith agreed upon at their second session, and the Platform of discipline consented unto by the Synod at Cambridge Anno 1648, *to be printed for the benefit of these churches in present and after times.*

EDWARD RAWSON, *Sec'ry.*

PREFACE.

THE Lord Jesus Christ witnessed a good confession, at the time when he said, to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth; and he taketh notice of it, to the praise and high commendation of the church in Pergamos, that they held fast his name, and had not denied his faith. Nor are they worthy of the name of Christians, who, though the Lord by his providence call them publicly to own the truth they have professed, shall nevertheless refuse to declare what they believe, as to those great and fundamental principles in the doctrine of Christ, the knowledge whereof is necessary unto salvation. We find how ready the Apostle was to make a confession of his faith; though for that hope's sake he was accused and put in chains. And the Martyrs of Jesus, who have laid down their lives in bearing witness to the truth, against the infidelity, idolatry, heresy, apostacy of the world, when Pagan, Arian, or overspread with Popish darkness: Having their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, were free and forward in their testimony, confessing the truth, yea, sealing it with their blood. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation, *Rom.* x. 10. Nor is there a greater evidence of being in in a state of salvation, than such a confession, if made in times or places where men are exposed to utmost sufferings upon that account. 1 *John* iv. 15. And if confession of faith be, in some cases, of such importance and necessity, as hath been expressed; it must needs be in itself, a work pleasing in the sight of God, for his servants to declare unto the world, what those principles of truth are, which they have received, and are (by the help of Christ) purposed to live and die in the stedfast profession of. Some of the Lord's worthies have been of renown among his people in this respect; especially Iræneus and Athanasius of old, and of latter times Beza, all whose (not to mention others) confessions, with the advantage which the church of God hath received thereby, are famously known.

And it must needs tend much to the honor of the dear and blessed name of the Lord Jesus, in case many churches do join together in their testimony. How signally the Lord hath owned the confession of the four general Synods or Councils for the suppression of the heresies of those times,

needs not to be said, since no man can be ignorant thereof, that hath made it his concern to be acquainted with things of this nature. The confession of the Bohemians, of the Waldenses, and of the reformed Protestant churches abroad, (which also to shew what harmony in respect of doctrine there is among all sincere professors of the truth, have been published in one volume) all these have been of singular use, not only to those that lived in the ages when these declarations were emitted, but unto posterity, yea, unto this day.

There have been some who have reflected upon these New-English churches, for our defect in this matter, as if our principles were unknown; whereas it is well known, that as to matters of doctrine, we agree with other reformed churches: nor was it that, but what concerns worship and discipline, that caused our fathers to come into this wilderness, while it was a land not sown, that so they might have liberty to practice accordingly. And it is a ground of holy rejoycing before the Lord, that now there is no advantage left for those that may be disaffected towards us, to object any thing of that nature against us. For it hath pleased the only wise God so to dispose in his providence, as that the elders and messengers of the churches in the colony of the Massachusetts in New-England, did, by the call and encouragement of the honored general Court, meet together Sept. 10, 1679. This Synod at their second session, which was May 12, 1680, consulted and considered of a confession of Faith. That which was consented unto by the elders and messengers of the congregational churches in England, who met at the Savoy (being for the most part, some small variations, excepted, the same with that which was agreed upon first by the Assembly at Westminster, and was approved of by the Synod at Cambridge in New-England, anno 1648, as also by a general Assembly in Scotland) was twice publickly read, examined and approved of: that little variation which we have made from the one, in compliance with the other may be seen by those who please to compare them. But we have (for the main) chosen to express ourselves in the words of those reverend Assemblies, that so we might not only with one heart, but with one mouth glorify God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

As to what concerns church-government, we refer to the Platform of discipline agreed upon by the messengers of these churches anno 1648, and solemnly owned and confirmed by the late Synod.

What hours of temptation may overtake these churches, is not for us to say. Only the Lord doth many times so order things, that when his people have made a good confession, they shall be put upon the trial one way or other, to see whether they have (or who among them hath not) been sincere in what they have done. The Lord grant that the loins of our minds may be so girt about with truth, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

A

CONFESSION

OF

FAITH.

CHAP. I.

Of the holy Scripture.

ALTHOUGH the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom and power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet are they not sufficient to give that knowledge of God and of his will, which is necessary unto salvation: therefore it pleased the Lord at sundry times, and in diverse manners to reveal himself, and to declare that his will unto his church; and afterwards for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the church against the corruption of the flesh, and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly to writing: which maketh the holy scripture to be most necessary; those former ways of God's revealing his will unto his people being now ceased.

II. Under the name of holy scripture, or the word of God written, are now contained all the books of the Old and New Testament, which are these:

Of the Old Testament.

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Songs, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, Malachi.

Of the New Testament.

Mathew, Mark, Luke, John, the Acts of the Apostles, Paul's Epistle to the Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Phi-

lippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 to Timothy, 2 to Timothy, to Titus, to Philemon, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle of James, the first and second Epistles of Peter, the first second and third Epistles of John, the Epistle of Jude, the Revelation.

All which are given by the inspiration of God to be the rule of faith and life.

III. The books commonly called Apochrypa, not being of divine inspiration, are no part of the canon of the scripture; and therefore are of no authority in the church of God, nor to be any otherwise approved or made use of, than other human writings.

IV. The authority of the holy scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the word of God.

V. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church, to an high and reverend esteem of the holy scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God) the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the word of God; yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the holy spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.

VI. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture; unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the spirit, or traditions of men. Nevertheless we acknowledge the inward illumination of the spirit of God to be necessary for the saving understanding of such things as are revealed in the word: and that there are some circumstances concerning the worship of God and government of the church, common to human actions and societies, which are to be ordered by the light of nature, and christian prudence, according to the general rules of the word, which are always to be observed.

VII. All things in scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

VIII. The Old Testament in Hebrew, (which was the native language of the people of God of old) and the New Testament in Greek, (which at the time of writing of it was most generally known to the nations) being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical; so as in all controversies of religion, the church is finally to appeal unto them. But because these original tongues are not known to all the people of God, who have right unto and interest in the scriptures, and are commanded in the fear of God to read and search them; therefore they are to be translated into the vulgar language of every nation unto which they come, that the word of God dwelling plentifully in all, they may worship him in an acceptable manner, and through patience and comfort of the scriptures may have hope.

IX. The infallible rule of interpretation of scripture, is the scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it must be searched and known by other places, that speak more clearly.

X. The supreme Judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other, but the holy scripture delivered by the spirit; into which scripture so delivered our Faith is finally resolved.

CHAP. II.

Of God and of the holy Trinity.

THERE is but one only living and true God; who is infinite in being and perfection, a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions, immutable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, most wise, most holy, most free, most absolute, working all things according to the counsel of his own immutable and most righteous will, for his own

glory, most loving, gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgsession and sin, the rewarder of them that dilligently seek him, and withal most just and terrible in his judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty.

II. God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself, and is alone, in and unto himself, all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures, which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory, in, by, unto and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them, whatsoever himself pleaseth: in his sight all things are open and manifest, his knowledge is infinite, infallible and independent upon the creature, so as nothing is to him contingent or uncertain. He is most holy in all his counsels, in all his works, and in all his commands. To him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service or obedience, as creatures, they owe unto the Creator, and whatever he is further pleased to require of them.

III. In the unity of the God-head there be three persons of one substance, power, and eternity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the the holy Ghost: the Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son. Which doctrine of the Trinity is the foundation of all our communion with God, and comfortable dependence upon him.

CHAP. III.

Of God's eternal Decree.

GOD from all eternity did by the most wise and holy counsel of his own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.

II. Although God knows whatsoever may or can come to pass upon all supposed conditions, yet hath he not decreed any thing, because he foresaw it as future, or as that which would come to pass upon such conditions.

III. By the decree of God for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others fore-ordained to everlasting death.

IV. These angels and men thus predestinated, and fore-ordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

V. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his meer free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto, and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

VI. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he by the eternal and most free purpose of his will fore-ordained all the means thereunto: wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified and saved, but the elect only.

VII. The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.

VIII. The doctrine of this high mystery of predestination, is to be handled with special prudence and care, that men attending the will of God revealed in his word, and yielding obedience thereunto, may from the certainty of their effectual vocation, be assured of their eternal election. So shall this doctrine afford matter of praise, reverence and admiration of God, and of humility, diligence, and abundant consolation to all that sincerely obey the gospel.

CHAP. IV.

Of Creation.

IT pleased God the Father, Son, and holy Ghost, for the manifestation of the glory of his eternal power, wisdom and goodness, in the beginning to create or make of nothing the world, and all things therein, whether visible or invisible, in the space of six days, and all very good.

II. After God had made all other creatures, he created man, male and female, with reasonable and immortal souls, endued with knowledge, righteousness and true holiness, after his own image, having the law of God written in their heart, and power to fulfil it; and yet under a possibility of transgressing, being left to the liberty of their own will, which was subject to change. Besides this law written in their hearts, they received a command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; which while they kept, they were happy in their communion with God, and had dominion over the creatures.

CHAP. V.

Of Providence.

GOD the great Creator of all things, doth uphold, direct, dispose and govern all creatures, actions, and things from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, according to his infallible fore-knowledge and the free and immutable counsel of his own will, to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy.

II. Although in relation to the fore-knowledge and decree of God, the first cause, all things come to pass immutably, and infallibly; yet by the same providence he ordereth them to fall out, according to the nature of second causes, either necessarily, freely, or contingently

III. God in his ordinary providence maketh use of means, yet is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure

IV. The almighty power, unsearchable wisdom and infinite goodness of God, so far manifest themselves in his providence, in that his determinate counsel extendeth itself even to the first fall, and all other sins of angels and men, (and that not by a bare permission) which also he most wisely and powerfully boundeth, and otherwise ordereth and

governeth in a manifold dispensation, to his own most holy ends, yet so as the sinfulness thereof proceedeth only from the creature, and not from God, who being most holy and righteous neither is, nor can be the author or approver of sin.

V. The most wise, righteous and gracious God doth oftimes leave for a season his own children to manifold temptations, and the corruption of their own hearts, to chastise them for their former sins, or to discover unto them the hidden strength of corruption, and deceitfulness of their hearts, that they may be humbled, and to raise them to a more close and constant dependence for their support upon himself, and to make them more watchful against all future occasions of sin, and for sundry other just and holy ends.

VI. As for those wicked and ungodly men, whom God as a righteous judge for former sins, doth blind and harden, from them he not only withholdeth his grace, whereby they might have been enlightened in their understandings, and wrought upon in their hearts; but sometimes also withdraweth the gifts which they had, and exposeth them to such objects as their corruption makes occasions of sin; and withal gives them over to their own lusts, the temptations of the world, and the power of satan, whereby it comes to pass that they harden themselves, even under those means which God useth for the softning of others.

VII. As the providence of God doth in general reach to all creatures, so after a most special manner it taketh care of his church, and disposeth all things for the good thereof.

CHAP. VI.

Of the fall of Man, of Sin, and of the punishment thereof.

GOD having made a covenant of works and life thereupon, with our first parents, and all their posterity in them, they being seduced by the subtility and temptation of satan, did wilfully transgress the law of their creation, and break the covenant in eating the forbidden fruit.

II. By this sin they, and we in them, fell from original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

III. They being the root, and by God's appointment standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and

corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.

IV. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.

V. This corruption of nature during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and all the motions thereof are truely and properly sin.

VI. Every sin, both original and actual, being a transgression of the righteous law of God, and contrary thereunto, doth in its own nature bring guilt upon the sinner, whereby he is bound over to the wrath of God, and curse of the law, and so made subject to death, with all miseries spiritual, temporal and eternal.

CHAP. VII.

Of God's Covenant with Man.

THE distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience to him as their Creator, yet they could never have attained the reward of life, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which he hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.

II. The first covenant made with man, was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.

III. Man by his fall having made himself uncapable of life, by that covenant, the Lord was pleased to make a second, commonly called the covenant of grace; wherein he freely offereth unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his holy spirit to make them willing and able to believe.

IV. This covenant of grace is frequently set forth in scripture by the name of a Testament, in reference to the death of Jesus Christ the Testator, and to the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it, therein bequeathed.

V. Although this covenant hath been differently and variously administered in respect of ordinances and institutions in the time of the law, and since the coming of Christ in the flesh; yet for the substance and efficacy of it, to all its spiritual and saving ends, it is one and the same; upon the account of which various dispensations, it is called the Old and New Testament.

CHAP. VIII.

Of Christ the Mediator.

IT pleased God in his eternal purpose, to chuse and ordain the Lord Jesus his only begotten Son, according to a covenant made between them both to be the mediator between God and man; the Prophet, Priest, and King, the head and Saviour of his church, the heir of all things, and judge of the world: Unto whom he did from all eternity give a people to be his seed, and to be by him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified and glorified.

II. The Son of God the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the holy Ghost in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance: so that two whole perfect and distinct natures, the God-head and the man-hood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion; which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only mediator between God and man.

III. The Lord Jesus in his human nature, thus united to the divine in the person of the Son, was sanctified and annointed with the holy spirit above measure, having in him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell, to the end that being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, he might be throughly furnished to execute the office of a mediator and surety; which office he took not unto himself, but was thereunto called by his father, who also put all power and judgment into his hand, and gave him commandment to execute the same.

IV. This office the Lord Jesus Christ did most willingly undertake;

which that he might discharge, he was made under the law, and did perfectly fulfil it, and underwent the punishment due to us, which we should have borne and suffered, being made sin and a curse for us, enduring most grevious torments immediately from God in his soul, and most painful sufferings in his body, was crucified, and died, was buried and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption, on the third day he arose from the dead with the same body in which he suffered, with which also he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of his Father, making intercession, and shall return to judge men and angels at the end of the world.

V. The Lord Jesus by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he through the eternal spirit once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of God, and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.

VI. Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after his incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy and benefits thereof were communicated to the elect in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types and sacrifices, wherein he was revealed and signified to be the seed of the woman, which should bruise the serpents head, and the lamb slain from the beginning of the world, being yesterday and to-day the same, and forever.

VII. Christ in the work of mediation acteth according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature, is sometimes in scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature.

VIII. To all those for whom Christ has purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same, making intercession for them, and revealing unto them in and by the word, the mysteries of salvation, effectually persuading them by his spirit to believe and obey, and governing their hearts by his word and spirit, overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such manner and ways as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation.

CHAP. IX.

Of Free-will.

GOD hath endued the will of man with that natural liberty and power of acting upon choice, that it is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to do good or evil.

II. Man in his state of innocency had freedom and power to will and to do that which was good and well pleasing to God; but yet mutably, so that he might fall from it.

III. Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability to will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation, so as a natural man being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

IV. When God converts a sinner, and translates him into a state of grace, he freeth him from his natural bondage under sin, and by his grace alone enables him freely to will and to do that which is spritually good; yet so, as that by reason of his remaining corruption, he doth not perfectly nor only will that which is good, but doth also will that which is evil.

V. The will of man is made perfectly and immutably free to good alone in the state of glory only.

CHAP. X.

Of Effectual Calling.

ALL those whom God hath predestinated unto life, and those only, he is pleased in his appointed and accepted time, effectually to call by his word and spirit, out of that state of sin and death in which they are by nature, to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God, taking away their heart of stone, and giving unto them an heart of flesh, renewing their wills, and by his almighty power determining them to that which is good, and effectually drawing them to Jesus Christ: Yet so, as they come most freely, being made willing by his grace.

II. This effectual call is of God's free and special grace alone, not from any thing at all foreseen in man, who is altogether passive therein,

until being quickened and renewed by the holy spirit, he is thereby enabled to answer this call, and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

III. Elect infants dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, who worketh when and where, and how he pleaseth: so also are all other elect persons, who are uncapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word.

IV. Others not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the spirit, yet not being effectually drawn by the father, they neither do nor can come unto Christ, and therefore cannot be saved; much less can men not professing the Christian religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives, according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess: and to assert and maintain that they may, is very pernicious, and to be detested.

CHAP. XI.

Of Justification.

THOSE whom God effectually calleth, he also freely justifieth, not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins, and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous, not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone; nor by imputing Faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness, but by imputing Christ's active obedience unto the whole law, and passive obedience in his sufferings and death, for their whole and sole righteousness, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by Faith; which Faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

II. Faith thus receiving and resting on Christ, and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification; yet it is not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead Faith, but worketh by love.

III. Christ by his obedience and death did fully discharge the debt of all those that are justified, and did by the sacrifice of himself, in the blood of his cross, undergoing in their stead the penalty due unto them, make a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in their be-

half: yet inasmuch as he was given by the Father for them, and his obedience and satisfaction accepted in their stead, and both freely, not for any thing in them, their justification is only of free grace, that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners.

IV. God did from all eternity decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did in the fulness of time die for their sins, and rise again for their justification: nevertheless, they are not justified personally, until the Holy Spirit doth in due time actually apply Christ unto them.

V. God doth continue to forgive the sins of those that are justified; and although they can never fall from the state of justification, yet they may by their sins fall under God's fatherly displeasure: and in that condition they have not usually the light of his countenance restored unto them, until they humble themselves, confess their sins, beg pardon, and renew their Faith and repentance.

VI. The justification of believers under the old Testament, was in all these respects one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.

CHAP. XII.

Of Adoption.

ALL those that are justified, God vouchafeth in and for his only Son Jesus Christ to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry Abba Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.

CHAP. XIII.

Of Sanctification.

THEY that are effectually called and regenerated, being united to Christ, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, are also further sanctified

really and personally through the same virtue, by his word and spirit dwelling in them, the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened in all saving graces, to the practice of all true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

II. This sanctification is throughout in the whole man, yet imperfect in this life, there abide still some remnants of corruption in every part, whence ariseth a continual and irreconcileable war, the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.

III. In which war, although the remaining corruption for a time may much prevail, yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying spirit of Christ, the regenerate part doth overcome, and so the saints grow in grace, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

CHAP. XIV.

Of Saving Faith.

THE grace of Faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the word; by which also, and by the administration of the seals, prayer, and other means, it is increased and strengthened.

II. By this Faith a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein, and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth, yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatnings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving Faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone, for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.

III. This Faith, although it be different in degrees, and may be weak or strong, yet it is in the least degree of it different in the kind or nature of it (as is all other saving grace) from the Faith and common grace of temporary believers; and therefore, though it may be many times assailed and weakened, yet it gets the victory, growing up in many to the attainment of a full assurance through Christ, who is both the author and finisher of our Faith.

CHAP. XV.

Of Repentance unto Life and Salvation.

SUCH of the elect as are converted at riper years, having sometime lived in the state of nature, and therein served divers lusts and pleasures, God in their effectual calling giveth them repentance unto life.

II. Whereas there is none that doth good, and sinneth not, and the best of men may through the power and deceitfulness of their corruptions dwelling in them, with the prevalency of temptation, fall into great sins and provocations; God hath in the covenant of grace mercifully provided, that believers so sinning and falling, be renewed through repentance unto salvation.

III. This saving repentance is an evangelical grace, whereby a person being by the holy Ghost made sensible of the manifold evils of his sin, doth by Faith in Christ humble himself for it with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrency, praying for pardon and strength of grace, with a purpose and endeavour by supplies of the spirit, to walk before God unto all well-pleasing in all things.

IV. As repentance is to be continued through the whole course of our lives, upon the account of the body of death, and the motions thereof; so it is every man's duty to repent of his particular known sins, particularly.

V. Such is the provision which God hath made through Christ in the covenant of grace, for the preservation of believers unto salvation, that although there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation, yet there is no sin so great, that it shall bring damnation, on them who truely repent; which makes the constant preaching of repentance necessary.

CHAP. XVI.

Of Good Works.

GOOD works are only such as God hath commanded in his holy word, and not such as without the warrant thereof are devised by men out of blind zeal, or upon any pretence of good intentions.

II. These good works done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and living faith, and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their

brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end eternal life.

III. Their ability to do good works is not at all of themselves, but wholly from the spirit of Christ: and that they may be enabled thereunto, besides the graces they have already received, there is required an actual influence of the same Holy Spirit to work in them to will and to do, of his good pleasure; yet are they not hereupon to grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty, unless upon a special motion of the spirit, but they ought to be diligent in stirring up the grace of God that is in them.

IV. They who in their obedience attain to the greatest height which is possible in this life, are so far from being able to superarrogate, and to do more than God requires, as that they fall short of much, which in duty they are bound to do.

V. We cannot by our best works merit pardon of sin, or eternal life at the hand of God, by reason of the great disproportion that is between them, and the glory to come; and the infinite distance that is between us, and God, whom by them we can neither profit, nor satisfy for the debt of our former sins; but when we have done all we can, we have done but our duty, and are unprofitable servants: and because as they are good, they proceed from his spirit, and as they are wrought by us, they are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment.

VI. Yet notwithstanding, the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him, not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreproveable in God's sight, but that he looking upon them in his Son is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

VII. Works done by unregenerate men, although for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and to others; yet because they proceed not from an heart purified by Faith, nor are done in a right manner, according to the word, nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful, and cannot please God, nor make a man meet to receive grace from

God; and yet their neglect of them is more sinful and displeasing to God.

CHAP. XVII.

Of the Perseverance of the Saints.

THEY, whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.

II. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free-will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father, upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, and union with him, the oath of God, the abiding of his spirit, and the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace, from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.

III. And though they may through the temptation of satan, and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into greivous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve his holy spirit, come to have their graces and comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves; yet they are and shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of the Assurance of Grace and Salvation.

ALTHOUGH temporary believers, and other unregenerate men may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God, and state of salvation, which hope of theirs shall perish, yet such as truly believe on the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in a state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed.

II. This certainty is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of Faith, founded on the blood and righteousness of Christ, revealed in the gospel, and also upon the inward evidence of those graces, unto which promises are made, and on the immediate witness of the spirit, testifying our adoption, and as a fruit thereof, leaving the heart more humble and holy.

III. This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of Faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it; yet being inabled by the spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of ordinary means attain thereunto: and therefore it is the duty of every one to give all diligence to make his calling and election sure, that thereby his heart may be inlarged in peace and joy in the holy Ghost, in love and thankfulness to God, and in strength and cheerfulness in the duties of obedience, the proper fruits of this assurance; so far is it from inclining men to looseness.

IV. True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished and intermitted, as by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin, which woundeth the conscience, and grieveth the spirit, by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance, suffering even such as fear him to walk in darkness, and to have no light, yet are they neither utterly destitute of that seed of God, and life of Faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which by the operation of the spirit, this assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which in the mean time they are supported from utter despair.

CHAP. XIX.

Of the Law of God.

GOD gave to Adam a law of universal obedience written in his heart, and a particular precept of not eating the fruit the tree of knowledge of good and evil, as a covenant of works, by which he bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact and perpetual obedience, promised life, upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it, and endued him with power and ability to keep it.

II. This law so written in the heart, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness after the fall of man, and was delivered by God on mount Sinai in ten commandments, and written in two tables, the four first commandments containing our duty towards God, and the other six our duty to man.

III. Beside this law commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, his graces, actions, sufferings and benefits, and partly holding forth divers intructions of moral duties: all which ceremonial laws being appointed only to the time of reformation, are by Jesus Christ the true Messiah and only law-giver, who was furnished with power from the Father for that end, abrogated and taken away.

IV. To them also he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any now by virtue of that institution, their general equity only being still of moral use.

V. The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof; and that not only in regard of the matter contained in it, but also in respect of the authority of God the creator, who gave it: neither doth Christ in the gospel any way dissolve, but much strengthen this obligation.

VI. Although true believers be not under the law, as a covenant of works, to be thereby justified or condemned, yet it is of great use to them as well as to others, in that, as a rule of life, informing them of the will of God, and their duty, and directs and binds them to walk accordingly, discovering also the sinful pollutions of their nature hearts and lives, so as examining themselves thereby, they may come to further conviction of, humiliation for, and hatred against sin, together with a clearer sight of the need they have of Christ, and the perfection of his obedience. It is likewise of use to the regenerate, to restrain their corruptions, in that it forbids sin, and the threatnings of it serve to shew what even their sins deserve, and what afflictions in this life they may expect for them, although freed from the curse thereof threatened in the law. The promises of it in like manner shew them God's approbation of obedience, and what blessings they may expect upon the performance thereof, although not as due to them by the law, as a covenant of works; so as a man's doing good, and refraining from evil, because the law encourageth to the

one, and deterreth from the other, is no evidence of his being under the law, and not under grace.

VII. Neither are the fore-mentioned uses of the law contrary to the grace of the gospel, but do sweetly comply with it, the Spirit of Christ subduing and enabling the will of man to do that freely and cheerfully, which the will of God revealed in the law required to be done.

CHAP. XX

Of the Gospel, and of the extent of the Grace thereof.

THE covenant of works being broken by sin, and made unprofitable unto life, God was pleased to give unto the elect the promise of Christ, the seed of the woman, as the means of calling them, and begetting in them Faith and repentance: In this promise, the gosepel, as to the substance of it, was revealed, and was therein effectual for the conversion and salvation of sinners.

II. This promise of Christ and salvation by him, is revealed only in and by the word of God; neither do the works of creation or providence, with the light of nature, make discovery of Christ, or of grace by him, so much as in a general or obscure way; much less that men destitute of the revelation of him by the promise or gospel, should be enabled thereby to attain saving Faith or repentance.

III. The revelation of the gospel unto sinners made in divers times, and by sundry parts, with the addition of promises and precepts for the obedience required therein, as to the nations and persons to whom it is granted, is merely of the sovereign will and good pleasure of God, not being annexed by virtue of any promise to the due improvement of men's natural abilities, by virtue of common light received without it, which none ever did make, or can so do: And therefore in all ages the preaching of the gospel hath been granted unto persons and nations, as to the extent or straitning of it, in great variety, according to the counsel of the will of God.

IV. Although the gospel be the only outward means of revealing Christ and saving grace, and is, as such, abundantly sufficient thereunto; yet that men who are dead in trepasses, may be born again, quickened or regenerated, there is moreover necessary an effectual, irresistible work of the holy Ghost upon the whole soul, for the producing in

them a new spiritual life, without which no other means are sufficient for their conversion unto God.

CHAP. XXI.

Of Christian Liberty, and Liberty of Conscience.

THE liberty which Christ hath purchased for believers under the gospel, consists in their freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the rigor and curse of the law, and in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to satan, and dominion of sin, from the evil of afflictions, the fear and sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation; as also in their free access to God, and their yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a child-like love and willing mind: all which were common also to believers under the law, for the substance of them, but under the New-Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, the whole legal administration of the covenant of grace to which the Jewish church was subjected, and in greater boldness of access to the throne of grace, and in fuller communications of the free spirit of God, than believers under the law did ordinarily partake of.

II. God alone is the Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in any thing contrary to his word, or not contained in it; so that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience, and the requiring of an implicit Faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also.

III. They who upon pretence of Christian liberty do practice any sin, or cherish any lust, as they do thereby pervert the main design of the grace of the gospel to their own destruction, so they wholly destroy the end of Christian liberty, which is, that being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we might serve the Lord without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

CHAP. XXII.

Of Religious Worship, and of the Sabbath-day.

THE light of nature sheweth that there is a God, who hath Lordship and sovereignty over all, is just, good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served with all the heart, and all the soul, and with all the might: but the acceptable way of worshipping the true God, is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of satan, under any visible representations, or any other way not prescribed in the holy Scripture.

II. Religious worship is to be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and to him alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creatures; and since the fall, not without a mediator, nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.

III. Prayer with thanksgiving, being one special part of natural worship, is by God required of all men; but that it may be accepted, it is to be made in the name of the Son, by the help of his Spirit, according to his will, with understanding, reverence, humility, fervency, faith, love, and perseverance: and when with others in a known tongue.

IV. Prayer is to be made for things lawful, and for all sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter, but not for the dead, nor for those of whom it may be known that they have sinned the sin unto death.

V. The reading of the scriptures, preaching and hearing of the word of God, singing of psalms, as also the administration of baptism and the Lord's supper, are all parts of religious worship of God, to be performed in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, reverence and godly fear. Solemn humiliations with fastings, and thanksgiving upon special occasions, are in their several times and seasons to be used in an holy and religious manner.

VI. Neither prayer nor any other part of religious worship, is now under the gospel either tied unto, or made more acceptable by any place in which it is performed, or towards which it is directed: but God is to be worshiped every where in spirit and in truth, as in private families daily, and in secret each one by himself, so more solemnly in

the public assemblies, which are not carlessly nor wilfully to be neglected, or forsaken, when God by his word or providence calleth thereunto.

VII. As it is of the law of nature, that in general a proportion of time by God's appointment be set apart for the worship of God; so by his word in a positive, moral and perpetual commandment, binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a sabbath to be kept holy unto him, which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week, and from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which in scripture is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian sabbath, the observation of the last day of the week, being abolished.

VIII. This sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy.

CHAP. XXIII.

Of Lawful Oaths and Vows.

A LAWFUL oath is a part of religious worship, wherein the person swearing in truth, righteousness and judgment, solemnly calleth God to witness what he asserteth or promiseth, and to judge him according to the truth or falsehood of what he sweareth.

II. The name of God only is that by which men ought to swear, and therein it is to be used with all holy fear and reverence; therefore to swear vainly or rashly by that glorious and dreadful name, or to swear at all by any other thing, is sinful, and to be abhorred: yet as in matters of weight and moment an oath is warranted by the word of God, under the New Testament, as well as under the old; so a lawful oath, being imposed by lawful authority in such matters, ought to be taken.

III. Whosoever taketh an oath warranted by the word of God, ought duly to consider the weightiness of so solemn an act, and therein to avouch nothing but what he is fully persuaded is the truth: neither may

any man bind himself by oath to any thing, but what is good and just, and what he believeth so to be, and what he is able and resolved to perform. Yet it is a sin to refuse an oath touching any thing that is good and just, being lawfully imposed by authority.

IV. An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, without equivocation or mental reservation: It cannot oblige to sin, but in any thing not sinful being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man's own hurt; nor is it to be violated, although made to heretics or infidels.

V. A vow, which is not to be made to any creature, but God alone, is of the like nature with a promissory oath, and ought to be made with the like religious care, and to be performed with the like faithfulness.

VI. Popish monastical vows of perpetual single life, professed poverty and regular obedience, are so far from being degrees of higher perfection, that they are superstitious and sinful snares, in which no Christian may intangle himself.

CHAP. XXIV.

Of the Civil Magistrate.

GOD the supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him, over the people for his own glory and the public good; and to this end hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that do good, and for the punishment of evil doers.

II. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate, when called thereunto: In the management whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth, so for that end they may lawfully now under the New Testament wage war upon just and necessary occasions.

III. They, who upon pretence of Christian liberty shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercises of it, resist the ordinance of God, and for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaing of such practices as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship or conversation, or to the power of godliness, or such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in

their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order, which Christ hath established in the church, they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate; yet in such differences about the doctrines of the gospel, or ways of the worship of God, as may befal men exercising a good conscience, manifesting it in their conversation, and holding the foundation, and duly observing the rules of peace and order, there is no warrant for the magistrate to abridge them of their liberty.

IV. It is the duty of people to pray for magistrates, to honour their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority for conscience sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrates just and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted, much less hath the Pope any power or jurrisdiction over them in their dominions, or over any of their people, and least of all to deprive them of their dominions or lives, if he shall judge them to be heretics, or upon any other pretence whatsoever.

CHAP. XXV.

Of Marriage.

MARRIAGE is to be between one man and one woman: neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time.

II. Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue, and of the church with an holy seed, and for preventing of uncleanness.

III. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry, who are able with judgment to give their consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry in the Lord, and therefore such as profess the true reformed religion, should not marry with Infidels, Papists, or other Idolaters: neither should such as are godly, be unequally yoked by marrying such as are wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresy.

IV. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity or affinity forbidden in the word, nor can such incestuous marriages ever be made lawful by any law of man, or consent of parties, so as those persons may live together as man and wife.

CHAP. XXVI.

Of the Church.

THE Catholic or Universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head thereof, and is the spouse, the body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

II. The whole body of men throughout the world, professing the faith of the gospel, and obedience unto God by Christ according unto it, not destroying their own profession by any errors everting the foundation, or unholiness of conversation, they and their children with them are, and may be called the visible Catholic church of Christ, although as such it is not intrusted with any officers to rule or govern over the whole body.

III. The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error, and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of satan: nevertheless Christ always hath had, and ever shall have a visible kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him, and make profession of his name.

IV. There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ, nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof, but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God, whom the Lord shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.

V. As the Lord in his care and love towards his church, hath in his infinite wise providence, exercised it with great variety in all ages for the good of them that love him, and his own glory; so according to his promise, we expect that in the latter days, antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged and edified, through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable and glorious condition, than they have enjoyed.

CHAP. XXVII.

Of the communion of Saints.

ALL Saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head by his spirit and faith, although they are not made thereby one person with him,

have fellowship in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection and glory: and being united to one another in love, they have communion in each others gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

II. All Saints are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification: as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities: which communion, though especially to be exercised by them in the relations wherein they stand, whether in families or churches, yet as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

CHAP. XXVIII.

Of the Sacraments.

SACRAMENTS are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by Christ, to represent him and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him, and solemnly to engage us to the service of God in Christ, according to his word.

II. There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union between the sign and the thing signified; whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.

III. The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them, neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the spirit, and the word of institution, which contains together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.

IV. There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel, that is to say baptism and the Lord's supper; neither of which may be dispensed by any but by a minister of the word lawfully called.

V. The sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were for substance the same with those of the New.

CHAP. XXIX.

Of Baptism.

BAPTISM is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life; which ordinance is by Christ's own appointment to be continued in his church, until the end of the world.

II. The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost, by a minister of the gospel lawfully called thereunto.

III. Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary, but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.

IV. Not only those that do actually profess Faith in, and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized, and those only.

V. Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed to it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it; or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.

VI. The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered, yet notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the holy Ghost to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will in his appointed time.

VII. Baptism is but once to be administered to any person.

CHAP. XXX.

Of the Lord's Supper.

OUR Lord Jesus in the night wherein he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the Lord's supper, to be observed in his churches to the end of the world, for the perpetual remem-

brance, and shewing forth of the sacrifice of himself in his death, the sealing of all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto him, and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other.

II. In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor any real sacrifice made at all for remission of sin of the quick or dead, but only a memorial of that one offering up of himself upon the cross once for all, and a spiritual oblation of all possible praise unto God for the same; so that the Popish sacrifice of the mass (as they call it) is most abominable injurious to Christ's own only sacrifice, the alone propitiation for all the sins of the elect.

III. The Lord Jesus hath in this ordinance appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people, to pray and bless the elements of bread and wine, and thereby to set them apart from a common to an holy use, and to take and break the bread, to take the cup, and (they communicating also themselves) to give both to the communicants, but to none who are not then present in the congregation.

IV. Private masses, or receiving the sacrament by a Priest, or any other alone, as likewise the denial of the cup to the people, worshipping the elements, the lifting them up, or carrying them about for adoration, and the reserving them for any pretended religious use, are all contrary to the nature of this sacrament, and to the institution of Christ.

V. The outward elements in this sacrament duly set apart for the uses ordained by Christ, have such relation to him crucified, as that truly, yet sacramentally only, they are sometimes called by the name of the things they represent, to wit, the body and blood of Christ; albeit in substance and nature they still remain truly and only bread and wine as they were before.

VI. That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant not to the scripture alone but even to common sense and reason, overthroweth the nature of the sacrament, and hath been, and is the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries.

VII. Worthy receivers outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by Faith, really and indeed, yet

not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally in, with, or under the bread and wine, yet as really, but spiritually present to the Faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.

VII. All ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Christ, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and cannot without great sin against him, whilst they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto: yea, whosoever shall receive unworthily, are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, eating and drinking judgment to themselves.

CHAP. XXXI.

Of the state of Man after Death, and of the resurrection of the Dead.

THE bodies of men after death return to dust and see corruption; but their souls (which neither die nor sleep) having an immortal subsistance, immediately return to God who gave them, the souls of the righteous being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies: and the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, where they remain in torment and utter darkness, reserved to the judgment of the great day: besides these two places of souls separated from their bodies, the scripture acknowledgeth none.

II. At the last day such as are found alive shall not die, but be changed, and all the dead shall be raised up with the self same bodies, and none other, although with different qualities, which shall be united again to their souls forever.

III. The bodies of the unjust shall by the power of Christ be raised to dishonour; the bodies of the just by his spirit unto honour, and be made conformable to his own glorious body.

CHAP. XXXII.

Of the Last Judgment.

GOD hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all power and judgment is given to

the Father: in which day, not only the apostate Angels shall be judged, but likewise all persons that have lived upon earth, shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to give an account of their thoughts, words and deeds, and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or evil.

II. The end of God's appointing this day, is for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and of his justice in the damnation of the reprobate, who are wicked and disobedient: for then shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fulness of joy and glory, with everlasting reward in the presence of the Lord, but the wicked, who know not God, and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ, shall be cast into eternal torments, and be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

III. As Christ would have us to be certainly persuaded that there shall be a judgement, both to deter all men from sin, and for the greater consolation of the godly in their adversity: so will he have that day unknown to men, that they may shake off all carnal security, and be always watchful, because they know not at what hour the Lord will come, and may be ever prepared to say, *Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.* Amen.

THE END.

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